

DISCOURSES

1607/1622.

ON SEVERAL

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED

AT LONDON IN THE YEAR MDCCI.

BY ROBERT FLEMING, V. D. M.

*son of the Author of the Fulfilling
of the Scriptures.*

A NEW EDITION.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN LORD CARMICHAEL,

Principle Secretary of State for the Kingdom of Scotland,
One of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council,
and Chancellor of the College of Glasgow.

Octr - 1873

MY LORD,

THE honour I have in being related to your Lordship, and the happiness I enjoy in being acquainted with You, do not only encourage me to prefix your Lordship's Name to the following Discourses, but allow me also to believe you will not take it amiss that I do so.

And, since you have so lately laid me under new ties to your Lordship, in designing my promotion to so considerable an Office, as that of Principal of the College of Glasgow, I find myself obliged to lay hold on this first Opportunity of declaring to the World the grateful sense I have of so great and undeserved a Favour; and the rather, because my Circumstances have not allowed me the Satisfaction of complying with so kind and generous an Offer.

But, seeing it is to my own loss and disadvantage only, that I have declined so very honourable and beneficial a Place, and that therefore I must be supposed to have acted thus from Considerations of another nature, I know your
Lordship

Lordship will judge, from the true regard You have to Conscience yourself, that some straitening Circumstances of this kind must have been (as indeed they were) the only Remora that prevented my being so happy as your Lordship designed I should; and that therefore You will not be displeased with me for what was not my Fault, but my Misfortune.

I am not made for Flattery, and I know your Lordship is above it: And therefore I shall not say any thing here by way even of just Encomium; because as your Character is so public that it needs it not, so your Modesty is so great, that I know any attempt of this kind would be unwelcome and uneasy to You.

I shall therefore only tell your Lordship, that, as I question not but You have the good Wishes of all honest Men that know You, so I reckon myself peculiarly obliged to beg of God, that You may long be preserved, jointly to serve God and your Prince, the Church and your Country, with the same unshaken Constancy, unbiaſſed Fidelity, and unspotted Reputation, that You have hitherto been honoured to do.

Which, and that God may bless You and your Honourable Family, with all Spiritual and Temporal Mercies here, and with Eternal Felicity and Glory at last, is and shall be the earnest and constant Prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obliged

and most obedient Servant,

London, 1701.



ROBERT FLEMING.

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DISCOURSE
ON THE
RISE AND FALL OF PAPACY.

I Suffer the following Discourses to break loose from their fellows, to take their fortune, as we use to say, in the wide world. And, seeing the candour of so many of my friends has made them think they might not be un-
useful, I must therefore expect that they will, from the same principle, defend this publication of them against the censures they may be supposed to fall under, both from open enemies and pretended friends. For, though it be a common, and, as it were, threadbare argument, to plead importunity in this case, yet it is sufficiently known to several of you, that if it had not been for this, the world had not been troubled with any thing further of this kind from me. For as I am sure no affectation to be more known or taken notice of has influenced me to present these discourses to public view; so I do suppose it is not unknown to some of you that retirement from this noisy and vain world has ever been the sum of my ambition, excepting when public work and service has obliged me to shake off the beloved fetters of so dear a confinement.

A

I shall

I shall not therefore say more as to the following Essays, than to tell you, (what many of you know already), that, as the first of the discourses that follow this prefatory one, gave rise to the publishing of the second, so the second gave occasion to the printing of the third. And, therefore, seeing the late opportunity of preaching, when we entered into our new meeting-place here in London, Sept. 29, 1700, did induce some of you to desire the publication also of that sermon I preached when I entered upon the pastoral and ministerial work among you, June 19, 1698, the same occasion has given birth to the last additional discourse, which some remember I made when I was solemnly set apart to the ministerial office, Feb. 9, 1687, which I have the rather consented to print now, because it doth not only suit with the second discourse, but because I remember several false, or at least imperfect copies were taken of it, when I did at first deliver it.

And seeing the last discourse, which yet was the first as to time, doth now appear in the view of the world, I found myself in some sort obliged to interest all my friends in this prefatory address; wherein I do particularly include those of the English church of Leyden, and Scots church in Rotterdam, to whom I stood related successively as minister or pastor; whom I do the rather mention here, that I may let them know how much they are still upon my thoughts, though we are separated as to place.

But seeing my work is now more particularly appropriated to you, whom I am more immediately concerned with and related unto at present, I do therefore, in a more special manner address myself to you at this time. And I hope ye will bear with me, if from my sincere respect for your welfare, I detain you a while here before ye enter upon the perusal either of my Apocalyptical Thoughts following, or the other Discourses which I do present you with



with at your own desire. For in case either of death, or being otherwise rendered incapable to serve you, I am willing to give a vent to my thoughts and affection at this time, that, whatever comes of me, the following discourses, together with this, may stand as a lasting witness of my real concern for your souls' welfare.

In the first place, therefore, I do declare, that though I am not willing to state my sufferings upon little matters or modes of worship and expression, yet I can sincerely say, that should the Divine Providence call me to lay down my life for the Truths themselves which I have preached among you, I hope I should be so far from quarrelling with the procedure of God this way, that I should rejoice in such a martyrdom. And, as I hope I have not contradicted in my life what I have preached in the pulpit, whatever my infirmities have been, so I presume it will not be looked upon as pride or vanity, if I say with the great apostle, (though as to the last clause I dare not pretend to have been any pattern to you), "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Phil. iv. 8, 9.

For, in the next place, I thank God that he that knows the secrets of all hearts, doth testify, together with my conscience, that a sincere concern to be useful to our common Christianity, was the thing that did at first influence me to enter upon this great work of the ministry, and hath ever since engaged me, though under more discouragements than most men, to continue and labour in it. So that it is matter of sweet reflection to me that I never

gave any occasion to brand our holy profession with the odious name of priest-craft, whatever any others may have done. For, as I have had no other ambition than to engage and draw men over to the great and catholic interests of Christianity itself, in order to their becoming the followers and servants of our glorious God and blessed Saviour; so I am sure I can confidently say, without any vanity or affectation, (for which I dare appeal not only to you, but to all others that have known me ever since I began to preach), that there is not one in the world that ever had just occasion so much as to think that I did at any time attempt to bring any person over to my way, as a party. And, as thus I have been far from seeking either honour, interest, or popularity, so there are not a few that can bear me witness that I have incurred the censures of some men of very different denominations, because I could never be induced to think that religion did properly stand in the rituals of any of the contending parties.

The differences, therefore, but especially the animosities, that are among protestant Christians, have ever been grievous and afflictive to me; and to heal these, I could cheerfully be offered up a sacrifice, if I can be supposed to be conscious of the sentiments and movements of my own soul. For though we of this congregation differ from all others that dissent from the episcopal communion, in this, that we are, in a peculiar sense, upon a national foundation, viz. in as far as we not only own the same church government, but keep up the same way that the church of Scotland useth in her public administrations, to which most of us belong as natives, and all of us as proselytes. Yet I must publicly own, that abstracting from this, I am a dissenter from that party that ingross and monopolize the name of the church of England. For, though I have ever looked upon other controversies as more edifying and momentous

mentous than those unhappy ones that have kept that great body and ours divided: yet I have so far considered them as hitherto to find no reason to quit that way I was educated in, notwithstanding the specious reasons made use of to prejudice people against us as schismatics, rather than to convince us that we are so.

Therefore, in the third place, I cannot but own, (without any design to reflect upon them that differ from me in such matters), that I look upon that way as nearest to the Christian institution, that has the fewest, and most natural, and unaffected, and consequently most spiritual rites and ceremonies, in the performance of gospel ordinances. For, as a learned conformist * says, in a book which he did afterwards indeed seem to differ from, but never attempted to retract or refute, and, perhaps, was never able to do: “Certainly the primitive church, that did not charge men with such a load of articles as now in these latter ages men are charged with, would much less have burdened men with imposing doubtful practices upon them as the ground of Church communion. There is nothing then that the primitive church deserves more imitation in by us than that admirable temper, moderation, and condescension which was used in it towards all the members of it. It was never thought worth the while to make any standing laws for rites and customs that had no other original but tradition, much less to suspend men from her communion for not observing them.” And if this was the practice of the primitive church, it was eminently so in the apostolical age; “to whom, as acted by the Holy Ghost, it seemed good to require nothing by way of imposition, but a very few things necessary, viz. that Christians should abstain from idols, blood, things strang-

* Stilling. Iren. p. 122. and 68.

led, and fornication." Acts xv. 28, 29. But alas! since that time it hath seemed good to men, (but I am sure not to the Holy Spirit), to impose a great many unnecessary things on the consciences of others, without any such allowance as was given them, "that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind in what he did." Rom. xiv. 5. For what regard have some men to this apostolical rule, when "their impositions are laid as stumbling-blocks in their brethrens way," Rom. xiv. 13, &c. "without any regard to the wounding of their weak consciences, upon the supposition they are so?" 1. Cor. viii. 12. Is this to imitate the apostle's tenderness, who resolved rather "never to eat flesh than to offend any weak brother?" 1. Cor. viii. 13. Or do men this way "seek the things of Jesus Christ, or their own private ends and emoluments most?" Phil. ii. 21.

Therefore let men dispute about forms and ceremonies, and their decency or necessity, as long as they please; I must say with a reverend conforming minister*, "That
 "all the art and power of the world cannot make trifles
 "in the worship of God seem matters of importance to
 "them that relish heaven. What trumpery are habits,
 "various gestures and postures to a man that is swallow-
 "ed up in the contemplation of the infinite majesty of
 "the glorious God? or that is lost in the ravishing admi-
 "ration of his goodness and love? or that is sunk into the
 "lowest abasements and self-aborrence for his sins? Such
 "a soul may be loaded with humane inventions, but he
 "can never look upon them as ornaments or helps to de-
 "votions."

* See P. M. in his *Vanity, Mischief, and Danger of Ceremonies*, proposed to the Convocation, and printed anno 1690.

Whatever then be the various ideas and theories of what we call edification, yet still, as none can dispute us out of what we receive most advantage from as to our bodies, so neither as to our souls. For if no man can be able to persuade me that his constitution of body is such a standard to mankind, that I and all others are obliged to reckon that food most healthful for us which the imposer tells us is so to him, though at the same time we experience it to be noxious or disagreeable to us; I know no more reason why any man should pretend a power of imposing modes and forms on my conscience, which I am dissatisfied with, from no other reason but this, that they appear to be the most excellent or decent to him. So that as liberty is equally necessary in the one case as in the other, unless we value the health of our bodies above the peace of our consciences and security of our souls: so the contrary practice, when force is used, can admit of no softer term than that of anti-christian tyranny. I cannot therefore but highly approve of what I find in a book * I have already mentioned: "What possible reason can be given," says the author, "why such things should not be sufficient for communion with a church, which are sufficient for salvation? And certainly these things are sufficient for that which are laid down as the necessary duties of Christianity by our Lord and Saviour in his Word."

I mention these things, God is my witness, for no private design, to uphold a party, or to serve the ends of it as such, but to let those that are prejudiced against us know, that we are acted by religion as a principle, and not as a notion only; and that this is the reason of our dissent from those that share the emoluments of the church among

* Stilling. Iren. Preface p. 8.

them. Otherwise it were not probable that we should unite in acting contrary to our own interest, merely from faction or humour, if we may presume to know our own sentiments; and I hope most, if not all of us, durst not dissemble before the great God all our days, in a matter of so great importance as this is. So that the dissenting of so many persons from the established church, to their own hurt and disadvantage in the world, may be looked upon as no contemptible argument, by unbiaſſed persons, that there are some men that are acted by religion as a principle, and that take up the ministry otherwise than as a trade.

But I had this further design in touching upon our unhappy differences, that, considering that they do only concern the externals and circumstantials of religion, both ye and all others that peruse these lines and the following discourses, may be taken off from that fury and bigotry by which so many seem to be possessed at this day, and may learn to mind the great essentials of Christianity more, acting conscientiously yourselves in all things, and judging charitably of those that differ from you, whether they do so of you or not. For what I have said on this head is not in the least designed to reflect upon those that differ from us, among whom I acknowledge there are many distinguishable, not only for parts and learning, but for piety and moderation also, upon which accounts I cannot but honour and love them, though they should both despise and hate me. Nay, I question not but even many of the bigots for cathedral worship, and its annexed hierarchy, (who are for running up these to as near a conformity to Rome as they can, and yet stamp all with a confident pretending to a *Jus Divinum*), may act from conscience, even in their uncharitableness to them that conscientiously differ from them, yea, in their hatred of them, and rage against them, where

where they have power. But then it must be remembered, that as their zeal is not according to knowledge, so they are of the same tribe with those of whom our Saviour speaks, when he tells us, "That they would persecute, yea, kill his servants, when they had opportunity, believing at the same time that they did God most acceptable service." But he immediately adds, "And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me." However my design is not to reflect even on them, but rather to pity them, and wish them more knowledge and a better mind.

For as a contentious, and especially a persecuting temper, was never from God, nor according to the rule of the meek and holy Jesus; whose religion is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated: Jam. 3. 17. 18. So such a disposition was never more unseasonable than at this time. For they must be unaccountably unob-servant of, and unconcerned with the present state and posture of affairs in Europe, who see not in what danger the protestant interest is at present; considering what it has lost already, and is in hazard of losing further; together with the sad decay of true Christian piety, as well as unity, among all sorts of persons. I could therefore wish we might learn a little prudence, even from our popish adversaries, that we might unite in love, and in design to promote a general interest, though we attain not to an exact uniformity in all things. For why should not we join as one soul against that bloody and idolatrous party, when we see them do so against us? though their various sects and orders, such as Franciscans, and Dominicans, Jesuits, and Jansenists, differ as much from one another, both in their opinions, and in their form and habits, (as they are regimented under their several heads or generals, and as they live according to vastly different laws and rules), as

we can possibly be supposed to do. But alas! what moral prognostications have we now, but such as seem to portend ruin and misery to us? when we see the differences of parties grow up into a stated hatred, with a fixed design to ruin one another, and consequently murder the reformed cause, which we are obliged not only upon religious accounts to appear for, but even upon civil considerations, seeing popery is inconsistent with freedom and liberty, than which nothing in this world ought to be so dear to us. Can we have forgot what barbarities that inhumane party have committed in this world? For, if we may believe historians, says a learned man, ^a “Pope Julius was, in seven years, the occasion of the slaughter of 200,000 Christians. The massacre in France cut off 100,000 in three months.—P. Perionius avers, that in the persecution of the Albigenes and Waldenses, 1,000,000, lost their lives. From the beginning of the Jesuits till 1580. that is, thirty or forty years, 900,000 perished, saith Balduinus. The Duke of Alva, by the hangman, put 36,000 to death. Vergerius affirms, that the Inquisition, in thirty-years, destroyed 150,000. To all this I may add, the Irish Rebellion, in which 300,000 were destroyed, as the Lord Orery reports, in a paper printed in the reign of Charles II.” And how many have been destroyed in the late persecutions in France and Piedmont, in the Palatinate and Hungary, none I believe can fully reckon up, besides those that are or have been in the gallies, and that have fled. This is that idolatrous harlot, so glutted with the blood of the Saints, that a late author, in his Treatise of Convocations, sets up as a pattern to the Church of England; and that another author

in

^a Dr Moore in his Divine Dialogues, p. 161. See also his Mystery of Iniquity, lib. ii. chap. 15, 16, &c.

in his book, entitled, *The Case of the Regale and Pontificate*, (to the scandal of the Church of England, for whom they pretend such a zeal), would so fain have us united unto, and represents, therefore, in such favourable colours. But, I hope, all true Protestants will easily see the snake in the grass. And surely, when we are in hazard of being betrayed within ourselves, we have sufficient reason to awake out of our lethargic sleep, that we may do what possibly we can to save the nations we belong to from approaching desolations; or, if that cannot be, that we may, at least, save our own souls in the day of the Lord. For seeing we are like to feel the effects of the new conjunction of France and Spain, the election of a young politic Pope, and the apostacy of some Protestant Princes to the Romish interest, which, together with the impieties and scepticism of a great many within ourselves, are, I am sure, no good prognostics; have we not just reason to prepare for remarkable revolutions?—While, therefore, I think of these things, I cannot forbear to give a vent to my thoughts on the great and dark head of futurity, in presenting you with some conjectures in relation to our times, founded upon scripture prophecy, as far as I understand it.

Therefore, seeing this is the chief design of this discourse, which I have inscribed to you, ^a I hope you will bear with me in giving you some brief account of the times we are fallen in, and what we may expect if we live much longer. Which I am the rather induced to do, because we are just now entering upon a new age, from which we look back upon seventeen centuries which have elapsed since our Blessed Redeemer came into the world; and may, therefore, be allowed to conjecture, with some just ground, perhaps of probability, (for I do industriously avoid

^a This discourse was inscribed to his own congregation.

avoid the fatal rock of positiveness, which so many apocalyptic men have suffered themselves to split upon, what part of the Revelation remains yet to be accomplished.

But since I am to confine myself to a little compass here, as remembering I am writing no book properly, but an epistolary discourse, prefatory to those that follow, with which, therefore, it must keep some proportion; I shall content myself in giving you a few hints towards the resolution and improvement of that grand apocalyptic question, When the reign of Antichristianism or the Papacy began?

There are two things, therefore, which lie before me to be considered at this time.

I. I must fulfil my promise in giving you a new resolution of the grand apocalyptic question concerning the rise of the Great Antichrist, or Rome Papal: For, when we have done this, and fixed this æra or epocha, we may, by an easy consequence, see the time of the final fall and destruction of this dreadful enemy.

II. I must, in the next place, improve the resolution of this question, both theoretically, as a key to unriddle the dark apocalyptic times and periods, and practically, in order both to the regulation of your thoughts and the government of your lives, in some very weighty considerations deducible from thence.

The *first* thing, therefore, which I have to do, is to attempt the resolution of the principal apocalyptic question concerning the rise of antichristianism.

Now, in order to answer this distinctly, which hath exercised and wearied out all apocalyptic writers hitherto, there are some things I would premise, as so many *postulata*, which generally all are agreed in, and which Mr Mede, Dr More, Mr Durham, and Dr Cressener, have ir-

refragably proved. 1. "That the revelation contains the series of all the remarkable events and changes of the state of the Christian church to the end of the world." See Rev. 4. 1. & 10. 5, 6, 7. 2. "That mystical Babylon or the great whore, described there, doth signify Rome in an antichristian Church state." See Rev. 17. 1, 5, 18. 3. "That therefore this cannot be Rome pagan properly, but Rome papal." 4. "That the seven heads of the beast, or the seven kings, are the seven forms of government, which obtained successively among the Romans : " See Rev. 17. 10, 11. And seeing the sixth of these was, that which was only in being in John's time, (the former five having fallen before), that therefore consequently, the seventh head, which under another consideration is called the eighth, (the intervenient kingdom of the Ostrogoths being the seventh in number, though not properly Roman, and therefore, in that sense, none of the heads of the Roman government), is the last species of government, and that which is called most peculiarly, and by a specialty the beast or antichrist.

These postulata being supposed as certain, (which I would reckon no difficult thing to prove, were it needful), I must in the next place premise two preliminary considerations, before I come directly to answer the question itself.

The 1st is this ; "That the three grand apocalypitical numbers of 1260 days 42 months, and time, times and an half, are not only synchronical, but must be interpreted prophetically, so as years must be understood by days."

That these three numbers are Synchronical, will appear plain to any impartial considerer, that will be at pains to compare them, as we have them set down in this book of the Revelations, viz. the 1260 days, chap. 11. 3. and chap.

12. 6. the 42 months, chap. 11. 2. and chap. 13. 5. and the time, times and an half, chap. 12. 14. For it is clear, that the gentiles treading down the holy city 42 months, chap. 11. 2. is the cause of the witnesses prophesying for 1260 days in sackcloth, v. 3. And is not the woman or churches being in the wilderness for the same term of days, chap. 12. 6. any other than a new representation of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth? Seeing this must be while the beast is worshipped and served by the whole Roman world, during mens lunacy of 42 months continuance, chap. 13. 5. And, therefore, seeing the woman is said to be in the wilderness state of desolation and persecution for a time, and times, and half a time, in order thus to be preserved from the beast and serpent, as we see chap. 12. 14. It is likewise plain, that this number of three years and an half must be the very same with the two former numbers. Only it is to be observed by the way, that this period of time, when it is mentioned in relation to the church, is spoken of with respect to the sun, either as to his diurnal or annual rotation: Whereas when it is described in relation to the beast's unstable kingdom of night and darkness, it is made mention of with respect to the unconstant luminary, which changes its face continually, while it makes our months. And hence it is, that the church is represented, chap. 12. 1. under the emblem of a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet.

Now, as these numbers are synchronical, and the same, so it is easy to prove that they must be understood prophetically for years. I shall not insist here, upon the conjecture of ^a a learned man; that there was no diurnal rotation of the earth before the fall, and consequently no days
of

^a Whiston's Theory of the Earth, pag. 8, 79, 81. See Hypoth. 3.

of 24 hours, but only an annual rotation of this our planetary world; which he gives us as the original reason of the scripture's putting days for years frequently. For whatever be in this, it is plain that the scripture speaks thus in several places; by putting a lesser number figuratively for a greater, as well as a definite one for an indefinite. Witness the appointment of the week of years, *Exod. 33. 10, 11.* which is spoken of as if it were a week of days, *verse 12.* the seventh year of which is therefore called sabbatical, with respect to the seventh day sabbath. In the same way of speaking, *Ezekiel* was commanded to lie 390 days on his left side, and 40 on his right, each day for a year, as God himself says, *chap 4. 5, 6.* So likewise God punished the murmuring Israelites with 40 years abode in the wilderness, with relation to the 40 days that were spent in searching of the land of Canaan, *Numb. 14. 32.* The seven years of *Nebuchadnezzar's* lycanthropy, is thus called, indefinitely days or times, *Dan. 4. 32, 34.* Nay our Saviour himself speaks in this dialect when he calls the years of his ministry days, saying, "I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected," *Luke 13. 32.* But the most remarkable place to our purpose, is the famous prophecy of *Daniel's* 70 weeks or 490 days, *chap. 9. 24.* reaching down from the edict of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, in his 20th year, *Neh. 2. 1—10.* to our Saviour's suffering at Jerusalem; which was exactly 490 prophetic years, not Julian ones: the not distinguishing of which has hitherto confounded all interpreters, as I might shew at large, were this a proper place for it. But what the difference between these is, we shall quickly see.

In the mean time, I am now to prove, that the 1260 days are to be understood in a prophetic sense for years; for if I can prove this, it will necessarily follow, that the other numbers must be so interpreted also; since they are

the same with this. Now, that the 1260 days cannot be taken literally, but prophetically, will appear from hence; that it is impossible to conceive how so many great and wonderful actions, which are prophesied to fall out in that short time, could happen during the space of three solar years and an half; such as *e. g.* the obtaining power over all kindreds, tongues, and nations; the world's wondering at, and submitting unto the beast's reign; and the setting up an image to the imperial head, and causing it to be worshipped instead of the living emperor's, &c. And besides these things, seeing the 1260 days are the whole time of the papal authority, which is not to be totally destroyed until the great and remarkable appearance of Christ, upon the pouring out of the 7th vial; and that, therefore, Christ will have the honour of destroying him finally himself, (though this iniquity began to work even in the apostolical times;) therefore we may certainly conclude that it must take up some centuries of years to carry on this abomination that maketh desolate. "For though the Lord will gradually consume or waste this great adversary by the spirit of his mouth, yet he will not sooner abolish him, than by the appearing of his own presence," 2 Thess. 2. 8. ^a I chuse both to render and understand the words.

The

^a The learned Dr Whitby, in his late paraphrase and commentary upon the Epistles, does indeed advance a new notion on this verse and chapter, viz. that the Jewish Sanhedrim, government and nation, is primarily and chiefly understood here by the apostle, as the man of sin and antichrist, both upon the account of their opposing themselves to Christ, and persecuting of his followers, and upon the account also of their rebelling against the Romans. And he has said so much for the proof of this, that it may be thought to contain a refutation of my interpretation of the place. But even upon the supposition, that all that the Dr. says for his opinion should be true; yet it will be found no way to invalidate what I advance here. For

The 2d, preliminary consideration is ; " That in order to understand the prophetical years aright, we must reduce them to Julian years, or such as are in use with us now in Europe.

This is no idle nor chimerical inquiry ; seeing the ignorance of this has misled all our great apocalyptical men hitherto in their calculations ; and yet, unless we are able to adjust the difference between Prophetical and Julian years, we must still reckon at a venture, without any certainty of the truth and exactness of our arithmetic. Therefore, that we may understand this difference, we are to remember, that the ancients were far more rude and indistinct in their calculation of time than we have been since. And, indeed, such is their confusion this way, that we are obliged to God's Providence in giving us the exact compass of a prophetical year, even in this book, by fixing the synchronism of the three numbers above-mentioned. For by

all that are acquainted with the Jewish and apostolical writings, know that besides a first sense to be observed in prophecies, there is a second and remoter one more tacitly insinuated frequently, as the principal design of the spirit of God. I might shew this in innumerable instances, especially in the ancient prophecies that relate to David, or some other person, in the first sense or typical one, but in the Messiah ultimately and compleatly. But I shall not insist upon any thing of this kind now, seeing so many have done it already ; and there is no need to do it here, seeing Dr Whitby himself doth grant all I desire, when he says in his preface to this Epistle, pag. 383.

" But that I may not wholly differ from my brethren in this matter, I grant these words may in a secondary sense, (in which expression I only differ from the Dr seeing I look upon it to be the principal sense, because it is the second) " be attributed to the papal antichrist, or man of sin, and may be signally fulfilled in him, in the destruction of him by the spirit of Christ's mouth, he being the successor to the apostate Jewish church, to whom these characters agree, as well as to her ; and therefore in the annotations I have still given a place to this interpretation also."

these it is determined that thirty days make a month, and twelve of such months a year: So that 1260 days being divided into three years and an half, (or time and times and an half in the apocalyptical dialect), 360 days must make up a year, without the additional five days and odd hours and minutes, that are added in the calculation of the Julian year. For the Julian and Gregorian months consisting some of 30, and some of 31 days, excepting February only, and the years consequently of 365 days, there must needs be some considerable difference in the revolution of many centuries; which difference appears still greater if we consult the late curious astronomical calculations of Petavius, Tycho, Kepler, and others. But since their exactness hath only added five hours to every year, together with some minutes, firsts, seconds, &c *communibus annis*, which they themselves are not fully agreed in, I shall not be so nice upon this point as to follow them exactly in all their criticisms this way. However, since five hours additional to a year arise to an entire year in the revolution of 163 years, it ought not to be altogether neglected. But passing even these, and considering only the five days that are added to the 360, in our ordinary years, we will find that the 1260 days in the Revelation being reduced to years, are eighteen years short of Julian years, in the prophetical reckoning, by reason of the additional days turned into years in the ordinary accounts now, above the apocalyptical reckoning. To demonstrate which, I present you with the following scheme.

THE PROPHETICAL YEAR.

THE JULIAN YEAR

One	360	365
	<u>360</u>	<u>365</u>
Two	720	730
	<u>720</u>	<u>730</u>
Three	1080	1095
Half	<u>180</u>	<u>183</u>
Three years } and a half. }	1260	1278

606
1260
1866
1848

Now, if, according to this computation, we subtract 1260 apocalyptical years from 1278 Julian or Gregorian ones, (I call them so *ore rotundo*, overlooking the smaller measures of time), there remain 18 years to be cut off.

To apply this therefore to our design. If we may suppose that Antichrist began his reign in the year 606, the additional 1260 years of his duration, were the Julian or ordinary years, would lead us down to the year 1866, as the last period of the seven-headed monster. But seeing they are prophetic years only, we must cast away 18 years in order to bring them to the exact measure of time that the Spirit of God designs in this book. And thus the final period of papal usurpations, (supposing that he did indeed rise in the year 666), must conclude with the year 1848.

And now that I have hinted at the time of Antichrist's rise, as the conclusion of the preliminary considerations, I must proceed to prove this to be in one sense the true æra of the Papal Beast's reign. And here it is that I find myself extremely straitened, in discoursing of so great a subject in so narrow a compass. All, therefore, that I can say

say here will amount to a few short hints only, though, perhaps, no inconsiderable ones.

Seeing, therefore, as I said before, in the 4th *postulatum*, it is plain from Rev. xvii. 10. That the imperial government was the regnant head of the Roman Beast at the time of the vision: we have only the two following heads to consider as to their rise and duration. Let these things therefore be minded here.

1. That the seventh head or king of Rome, as I hinted before, whose character is, "That he was immediately to succeed to the imperial government, and to continue but a short space," Rev. xvii. 10. That, I say, this government could be no other than that of the kingdom of the Ostro-Goths in Italy.

For it is plain that the imperial dignity was extinguished in Italy, and in the western parts of the empire, by Odoacer the king of the Heruli, who forced Augustulus, the last sprig of an emperor, to abdicate his throne and power in the year 475, or 476, as others say. And though this Odoacer was soon destroyed by Theodoric the king of the Ostrogoths, yet the same form of regal government was continued by Theodoric and his successors. And though this kingdom continued for near 80 years, reckoning from Odoacer to Teias, yet the angel might justly call this a short time; for so it was, if compared either with the preceding imperial or succeeding papal government: Which suggests a very strong argument against some who would make this seventh king to denote the Oriental empire, which, as it began long before this time, so lasted many centuries afterwards, and was not totally extinct till Mahomet the Great's time, in the 1453. And surely this kingdom was sufficient to constitute a new head of the Roman people, seeing Rome and Italy were subjected entirely to those Gothic kings, and that they not only acted with the

the same authority that the emperors had used before, (excepting that they abstained from that title by a special Providence, that they might not be confounded with that government), but were owned by the senate and people of Rome as their superiors, yea, by the emperors of the East also; as might easily be proved from historians *, particularly Cassiodorus †, who was chief minister of state to two of those kings.

Whence it doth plainly appear, that this kingdom of the Ostrogoths was the seventh head, that was to continue a short time. And that therefore it follows, 1. That the change wrought by Constantine the Great, both as to the State and Religion of the empire, could not be looked upon as a new head, seeing the old government in all other respects was continued. And, 2. Neither can any person justly suppose that the form of the government was altered when the empire was divided into the East and West; seeing in all other respects also the imperial authority and rule was preserved. Therefore, 3. It follows also that the papal government was not regnant until the destruction of this Gothic kingdom in Italy; for there could not be two supreme heads of Rome at the same time.

Therefore, 2. We may conclude that the last head of the beast, which is the papal, did arise either immediately upon the extirpation of the Gothic kingdom, or some time after. But it could not rise to its power immediately after, seeing Justinian did, by the conquest of Italy, revive the imperial government again there, which by that means was healed, after the deadly wounds which the Heruli and the Goths had given it. Though, I confess, Justinian's conquests of

* See Baron. ad Ann. 472, 475, &c. Petav. Ration. Temp. lib. 7. cap. 5. Bellarm. de Translat. Imp. Rom. lib. 1. cap. 9, &c.

† In Lib. Variarum, Lib. 1. Ep. 23, 31, &c. Lib. 4. Ep. 45, &c. Lib. 5. Ep. 16, 18. Lib. 8. Ep. 2, 3, 4, &c.

Italy laid a foundation for the Pope's rise, and paved the way for his advancement, both by the penal and sanguinary laws which he made against all those that dissented from the Romish church, and by the confusion that followed upon Narfes's bringing in the Lombards. For during the struggles of them and the Exarchat, the Pope played his game so that the emperor Phocas found it his interest to engage him to his party, by giving him the title of Supreme and Universal Bishop.

Therefore we may justly reckon that the papal head took its first rise from that remarkable year 606, when Phocas did in a manner devolve the government of the West upon him, by giving him the title of Universal Bishop. From which period, if we date the 1260 years, they lead us down, as I said already, to the year 1866, which is 1848 according to prophetic calculation. Or, if a bare title of this sort be not thought sufficient to constitute the Pope head of the Beast, we may reckon this two years later, viz. from the year 608, when Boniface IV. did first publicly authorise idolatry, by dedicating the Pantheon to the worship of the Virgin Mary and all the Saints.

Now, it is very remarkable, that in the year 656 Pope Vitalian did first ordain that all public worship should be in Latin; and, therefore, however the notion of Irenæus* has been of late ridiculed, who observed that the characteristic number of the beast, viz. 666, answering to the number of a man's name, was to be found in the word *Λατίνος*, from whence he concluded that he was to be a Roman; I cannot but think there is something remarkable in this, even though the numerical letters of the other words should jump with this number also, not so much because of the antiquity of the notion, as upon the account of the

* Iren. adv. Hæret. Lib. 5. Cap. 30.

son he suggests to us for this, when he says, that though grants that other names, as that of *ivavlas*, may be so dered, yet he fixes upon this, because the * Latin monarchy is the last of all, and therefore the beast must relate this or none. Wherein I suppose he alludes to Daniel's count of the four monarchies, chap. 2. and 7. And, indeed, the little horn that arose out of the head of the fourth beast, chap. 7, 8. seems not unfitly to represent not only

* It ought to be observed here, that not only the Greek word, but even the Hebrew, contains the number 666, in the numerical letters thereof, whether we make use of רומיין *Romana*, scil. *Sedes*, or רמענוש *Romanus* vel *Latinus*, as appear from the following scheme,—

ר	200	ר	200	λ	50
ו	6	ם	40	α	1
ם	40	ע	70	τ	300
י	10	נ	50	ε	5
י	10	ו	6	ι	10
ת	400	ש	300	ν	30
				ο	70
	666		666	ς	200
					666

And whereas Bellarmin objects, that *Latinus* should be rendered by a single *iota* and not by *ei*, he is exceedingly mistaken: not only Irenæus renders the word thus, but all the Greeks do the same, as is plain in innumerable instances, such as in the names *Αντωνιος Σεβαστος*, which the Romans pronounce *Antoninus*, *Sabinus*. Nay, the ancient Romans spake the same way as the Greeks, as is plain in Plautus and the fragments of Ennius, with whom nothing is more common than *quais* for *quis*, *preimus* for *primus*, *capteivei* for *captivi*, *latinei* for *latini*, &c.

only Antiochus Epiphanes, but the Papal Antichrist, whose type he may therefore be supposed to be. For as he supposed to have plucked up three horns before it by the roots, so did the papal government rise also upon the ruins of the Exarchat, the Lombards, and the authority of the emperors in Italy.

I believe this account of Antichrist's rise will not be very acceptable to some, whose zeal for the Pope's downfall has made them entertain hope of living to see that remarkable time; which has made them invent plausible schemes to prove that this great enemy was seated in regal dignity long before the year 606. But if a man will trace truth impartially, he will have reason to think that the rise of this adversary could not be before that time. Nay, I must tell you, that I do not reckon the full rise of the Pope to the headship of the empire till a later date.

For, though the Pope got the title of Universal Bishop at that time, yet he was afterwards for a long time subject to temporal concerns, to the emperors. And therefore I cannot reckon him to have been, in a proper and full sense, head of Rome, until he was so in a secular, as well as ecclesiastical sense; And this was not until the days of Pipin, by whose consent he was made a secular prince, and a great part of Italy given to him as Peter's Patrimony. That as Boniface III. and his successors, by assuming the title of Universal Bishop, was the forerunner of Antichrist, as Gregory the Great prophesied he would be, who should be known in the world by that proud title, so likewise we may conclude that Antichrist was indeed come, when Paul I. became a temporal prince also. Phocas, therefore, did only proclaim the Pope to be the last head of Rome in the apocalypitical sense, but it was Pipin who gave him

solemn investiture, and seated him on his throne, which Charlemagne did afterwards confirm to him.

Now as near as I can trace the time of this donation of Pipin, it was in or about the year 758, about the time that Pope Paul the first began to build the church of St Peter and St Paul. Now, if we make this the *Æra* of the papal kingdom, the 1260 years will not run out before the year 2018, according to the computation of Julian years: but reducing these to prophetic ones, the expiration of the papal kingdom ends exactly in the year 2000, according to our vulgar reckoning. And if what I suggested above be true, that antichrist shall not be finally destroyed until the coming of Christ, then may this calculation be looked upon to be very considerable. For it has been a very antient opinion, that the world would last only six thousand years; that, according to the old traditional prophecy of the house of Elias, the world should stand as many millenaries as it was made in days; and that, therefore, as there were "two thousand years from the creation to Abraham, without a written directory of religion, and two thousand from thence to Christ, under the old economy of the law, so there would be two thousand years more under the Messiah." So that after the militant state of the Christian church is run out, in the year 2000, it is to enter upon that glorious "sabbatical millenary, when the saints shall reign on the earth, in a peaceable manner for a thousand years more." After the expiration of which, Satan shall be let loose to play a new game, and men shall begin to apostatize almost universally from the truth, gathering themselves together, under the character of Gog and Magog, from the four corners or parts of the world, until they have reduced the church to a small compass. But when they have brought the saints to the last extremity, Christ himself will appear in his glory, and destroy his ene-

mies with fire from heaven, Rev. 20. 9. ; Which denotes the great conflagration, 2 Pet. 3. 10, &c. ; which is followed with the resurrection, and Christ's calling men before him into judgment. And perhaps the time of this judgment will take up the greatest part or the whole of another millenary of years ; that as there were four thousand years from the creation to his first coming, there may be four from thence, to his triumphant entry into heaven with all his saints. For though the scripture call this time a day, yet we know what Peter says, that " a thousand years and a day are the same thing in divine reckoning." 2. Pet. 3. 8. But that all men that ever lived should be publicly judged in a day, or year, or century, so as to have all their life and actions tried and searcht into, is to me I confess inconceivable, not indeed in relation to God, but in relation to men and angels who must be convinced of the equity of the procedure and sentence of the judge.

But to return, I cannot forbear to take notice of one thing here ; that the year 758 was the year 666 from the persecution of Domitian, when John was in Patmos and wrote this book, (as Tertullian, Ireneus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerom, and all the ancients excepting Epiphanius tell us), which though some say was A. C. 95, was most probably in or about the year 92, the persecution of Domitian having begun two years before. So that here we have another characteristical mark of the number of the beast.

And now I hope I have said enough of the future part of time, as to the general idea which I think the revelation gives of it. But I must proceed one step further with you, and consider under what revolution of time we are at present ; that we may thence see what we are to expect, and how we are to act.

So that here I find myself insensibly taken off from any further

further direct prosecution of the question proposed by way of answer thereunto. And,

Therefore, II. I proceed to improve what I have said as to this question, both theoretically and practically.

And, 1st, I shall advance something here, as a theoretical improvement of what I have said upon the former head. For by this key, we may attain, in a great measure, to unlock the dark apocalyptical periods and times: those I mean that relate to the continuance of the papal power, both as to his gradual growth and increase, first, and his decay afterwards, until his last and final destruction. And in relation to these, the far greatest part of the apocalypse must be understood.

Now in order to this performance, I must premise this one thing; *viz.* That the seven seals, trumpets and vials, (in which is contained the order and series of the whole apocalyptical prophecy, and to the explication and illustration of which all the other particular visions are subservient), that I say these are joined together by the link of the seventh seal, and seventh trumpet; so as the seventh seal doth as it were produce or include the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet the seven vials in the same manner.

This I should reckon no difficult thing to demonstrate, but that it would be too long to insist upon it in this place. And seeing Mr Durham has done it in a great measure already, I pass it now the more easily. Only let me desire you to consider, that it was not until after the opening of the seventh seal that John saw the angels with the seven trumpets, chap. 8. 1, 2. And that it was after the sounding of the seventh trumpet also, that he tells us, he saw ἄλλο σημεῖον μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν, another sign great and wonderful, chap. 15. 1. which was the vision of the vials. So that I wonder that Mr Mede, Dr More, and almost all o-

thers, have suffered themselves to be confounded in their interpretations, by reason of their not observing this, and consequently by jumbling some of the trumpets with the seals, and most of the vials with the trumpets.

Now this being supposed, we will find the series of time run in the following order, according to this threefold septenary of periods, which do insensibly run out one into the other.

The first septenary of seals relates to the Christian church during the state of the Roman empire. And these do accordingly run in this order.

The first seal exhibits the state of the church "under the conduct of a glorious rider on a white horse, having a bow in his hand, and a crown given unto him, who went out conquering, and to conquer, chap. 6. 2. Under which emblem Christ himself is represented, going forth upon his conquests over Jews and gentiles. And as this relates to Christ's first victory over his enemies, after his commission to his disciples "to preach the gospel to all nations," Mat. 28. 18, 19, 20. "and the pouring down of his spirit for this end, on the day of Pentecost," Acts 2. So the full completion of it is not until the end of time. For after all other horsemen and enemies of the church have done their utmost against Christ and his people, we find this horseman leading them all in triumph as his captives, and proceeding in his conquests to make a full and final end of them. For which, see chap. 19. v. 11, 12, &c. So that this Seal begins with An. 33 or 34, and does not end until the end of time, as to its full completion. But if we reckon it only in relation to the beginning of the next seal, (Christ's conquests being darkened, as to the outward view of men, by what follows), we shall see that immediately.

The

The second seal, chap. 6. 3, 4. under the emblem of a "rider upon a red horse, (who had a great sword given him in order to take peace from the earth, and to engage men in wars)," represents the state of the empire from the time that Nero made war on the Jews, An. 66, and so contains the civil wars of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, when men did so remarkably kill one another, and the wars of Vespasian and Titus against the Jews, compleated afterwards by the terrible destruction of that nation under Hadrian; together with his other wars, and the preceding persecutions of Domitian and Trajan, and the conquests of this last prince. So that as this begins with An. 66, it ends with Hadrian's wars, An. 134, or with his life, An. 138.

The third seal, chap. 6. 5. 6. begins therefore with An. 138; where, under the hieroglyphic of "a rider on a black horse, with a pair of balances in his hand," to weigh and measure all things exactly, is set forth the excellent reigns of the admirable Antonines, Pius, and Philosophus. And therefore, this seal runs out in the year 180.

The fourth seal, chap. 6. 7. 8. represents the Roman horse turned pale, and the rider changed from a grave and awful judge to a murderer, so as to be called death, by reason of his throwing so many into Hades or the future state, by immature deaths. Where we have a very remarkable account of the state of the Roman empire after the decease of the brave Antoninus Philosophus, under the barbarities of Commodus, the short-lived reigns of Pertinax, and Didius Julianus, but especially under the severe and bloody Septimius Severus, in his wars against Pescennius Nigerius, Albinus and others, and under his son Caracalla; and afterwards under Macrinus, Heliogabalus, (the reign of the excellent Alexander Severus being but a short breathing to the empire and the Christians),

Maximinus and his son Pupienus, Balbinus and Gordianus, and Philippus and his son : With whose death I think this seal runs out in the year 250. And with the death of these Philipppi, who favoured Christianity, the four evangelical living creatures, which our translation renders beasts most unaccountably, cease to speak openly.

The fifth seal, therefore, discovers the state of the Christian church to be exceedingly languishing and melancholy, as if the saints were all slain, praying and crying for vengeance against their persecutors, while they are represented as lying under the altar, Chap. 6, 9, 10, 11. So that this period begins with Decius, the first universal persecutor of the Christians, (for all the former persecutions under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, and the Antonines, were but provincial ones, and that of Maximinus against the ministers only), who began his reign and persecution together in the year 250, and was seconded in it by Valerian, (for the short reigns of Trebonius Gallus and Emilianus hardly deserve to be taken notice of in this case). Now the souls of the martyrs are desired to rest patiently, until the confused reign of Galienus should run out, and the thirty tyrants that rose in his time should be cut off, together with the short lived Claudius Gothicus ; seeing, after that little interval, their brethren were also to suffer still further under Rome Pagan, viz. under Aurelian, and afterwards, (when the short reigns of Tacitus, Probus, Carus, and Carinus, should be over), under the cruel persecution raised against them by Dioclesian, and Maximianus elder and younger, together with Severus and Maximinus. So that this seal ends with the conclusion of this last persecution begun by Dioclesian, and so expires A. C. 306.

The sixth seal, Chap. vi. 12,—17, gives us an account of God's gracious answer at length to the prayer of the slain witnesses in the destruction of Rome pagan, after their

their cup was made full by the last cruel persecution. And this is described as if heaven and earth were come to an end; for so the prophets use to represent the ruin of kingdoms and monarchies, as we see, among other places, in Jer. iv. 24.; Isa. xiii. 10. and xxiv. 21, 23; and Joel ii. 10. So that this seal contains the great and terrible wars of Constantine the Great against all those last tyrants, from the year 306 to the death of the last pagan emperor Licinius, anno 324.

The seventh seal, therefore, Chap. viii. 1. represents the short breathing of the church and peace of the Christians under Constantine, from the year 313, when he first published an edict in their favour, and particularly from the death of Licinius, anno 324, to his own decease in the year 337, immediately upon which the scene alters. And then begins

The Second Septenary of Trumpets, which gives us an account of the state of the church in relation to the gradual growth and increase of her antichristian enemies, though in a way also of judgment upon them,—Which I represent to you in the following series and order.

The first trumpet, Chap. viii. 7. began a little after Constantine's death, in the wars between his eldest and youngest son, or at the death of the first in battle, and of the last by the usurpation of Magnentius, which was a kind of mixed storm of hail, fire, and blood. The continuance of it was in the persecutions against the orthodox by Constantius and Valens, with the intervention of that against all Christians by Julian the apostate. And the conclusion of it seems to be the usurpation of Maximus upon the death of Gratianus, and afterwards the death of Valentinian the Second, and finally the wars and death of Theodosius. So that it began with the year 339, and ended anno 395.

The

The second trumpet, chap. 8. 8, 9. represents a great kingdom, under the emblem of a mountain, see Jer. 51. 25. burning with fire, (i. e. in a cruel and fierce manner), and thrown into the midst of the body politic or empire of Rome, represented by the sea; see chap. 18. 15. by which the third part of it became blood. By which we are unquestionably to understand the irruption of the barbarous nations of the Vandals and Goths into the Roman dominions. This began about the death of Theodosius, and made a formidable progress An. 405, in the days of Arcadius and Honorius, by Radagisus, and afterwards Alaricus, who took Rome, An. 410. And it was continued during the inroads of Athaulphus the Goth, (who pillaged the great city, An. 414), and of Gensericus the Vandal, and of Attila the Hun into Italy and other Roman provinces, which they and others about that time wasted miserably to the year 455, and afterwards to the year 476.

The third trumpet, chap. 8. 10, 11. doth plainly represent the destruction of the western empire, by a star falling from the heaven of its glory as a burning lamp. For after it had struggled with its fatal destiny, under the obscure Cæsars, Avitus, Majoranus, Severus, &c. it did at length expire with Augustulus, An. 475, or 476. This star was called wormwood, because of the bitter troubles this brought upon the empire. For the Ostrogoths planted themselves in Italy, and reigned as arbitrarily as the emperors had ever done. So that this period began with the kingdom of the Ostrogoths, An. 476, and ended with it An. 553.

The fourth trumpet, chap. 8. 12. brings yet further desolations on Rome, by darkening its splendor and glory, represented by the eclipsing of the sun for a third part of it, and the moon and stars also in a like manner. By which we are to understand, no doubt, the decay of the imperial power

power and authority in the west, by the Lombards and the Exarchate afterwards. So that this trumpet lasted from the year 568, to the year 758, when Pipin made the pope in a manner king of Rome, who in requital of his kindness, gave his son Charlemagne the empty title of emperor of Rome, making thus the succeeding western empire an image of the ancient one, Rev. 13. 14, 15. by which both the power of the Lombards, of the Exarchate, and the emperors did as it were terminate in him. And as the Exarchate ended An. 752, so the Lombards were totally expelled Italy a little after, viz. in the year 773.

Now follows a threefold wo, which makes up the subject of the three following trumpets, which are therefore called the wo-trumpets, because of the remarkableness of these judgments above the former. Therefore,

The fifth trumpet, chap. 9. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. brings forth the first wo. The description of which is long, and the figures many; so that I cannot be supposed to say much on so large a head here. Let a short account satisfy you. In the first place, therefore, we are to understand, that no other than the bishop of Rome can be meant by the star that fell from heaven. For this is the symbol of the gospel-ministry, chap. 1. 20. and agrees not therefore with Mahomet. Neither can the place this star fell from, viz. heaven, which denotes the glorious and holy state of the church, agree to any other, than one that apostatizeth from the service of Christ to the service of the world and Satan. So that as ancient Babylon is said to fall from the heaven of temporal glory, as Lucifer or the morning star of the nations: So is the bishop of Rome said to fall from the spiritual heaven of his primitive glory and purity; being degenerated from the first angel of light in the church, to be the grand angel of darkness; and becoming thus the prince of incarnate devils, the key of the bottomless

bottomless pit, which he and his followers boast of as the keys of St Peter, being put into his hand by the old serpent, for carrying on the black designs of hell. 2. The dark pitchy smoke that came out of the pit, upon his opening it, was certainly designed to signify the ignorance that did then prevail in the world, and the gross and horrid errors that were spread abroad and vended for divine truths by the sottish monks, that then swarmed abroad under various names and leaders, and particularly the idolatry that then began to prevail universally in the world. For about that time, though several of the Greek emperors did stiffly oppose image-worship, yet the popes did at length prevail, though multitudes on both sides lost their lives in this quarrel. 3. The locusts that came out of this smoke were the Saracens, that followed Mahomet, who compiled the model of his religion, by the help of Jews and Christian heretics, especially of Sergius a Nestorian monk, whom ^a the Arabian and Turkish writers call Bahira. These Arabian locusts, (whose Hegyra or *Æra* is dated from Mahomet's flight from Mecca, An. Dom. 622, a little after the Pope got the title of universal bishop, An. Dom. 606), did in a little time so increase, that they conquered or over-run a great many countries in a very little time. For they overflowed Persia, Syria, Egypt, Palestine and other places about the year 729. They extended their arms into India, An. 643, and into Spain, An. 711. and ravaged several parts of France, from An. Dom. 721, to the year 726, till they were routed at length with a great slaughter by Charles Martel, about the year 728. However, they continued after that, to be a scourge to the christians, especially under the reign of the great Alman-

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^a See Dr Prideaux his life of Mahomet, pag. 45, 46, 47, 48.

or, until about the year 772, when ^a the Turks began to grow famous. So that the five months or 150 years, wherein they tormented the Christians, though they had no power to destroy their empire, was from 622 to 772. But we must not imagine that these five months of years are the period of this trumpet. For this must be reckoned from 758 to An. Dom. 1067, or thereabouts, when Tanolipix the Turk put an end to the Saracen empire, by conquering the Caliph of Persia. Now, therefore, in the fourth place, to pass by the other things observable in this Saracen wo-trumpet, let it be considered that as the Apostle the bishop of Rome is called the angel or messenger of the bottomless pit: So Mahomet the king and prophet of these Saracen locusts is called Abaddon or Apollyon, v. 11. i. e. a destroyer, as carrying on his religion by sword and violence; from whence his locust-followers are said, v. 10. to have stings like scorpions, by which they poisoned the souls of men, if they did at all spare their bodies; for they were in other respects, swift, and strong as horses, and had faces like men in their reasoning, as well as fighting by their superstition, adorned with hair like women; appearing soft, and insinuating at first view, though armed with lions teeth, as being fierce and cruel. By reason of which qualifications they got many victories, and are therefore represented as crowned with crowns of gold, v. 8, 9. But, upon the whole matter, this trumpet, as it supposes the rise of the Saracen empire, from the *Æra* of the Hegyra 622; and the begun rise of the Pope from the year 606 or 608. So after five months, or 150 years, i. e. to the year 772, the Saracen preparations continued, and the papal from 606 or 608 to 756 or 758. So that the

8. See the Authors of the Turkish history, put out by Conradus Mascherus.

the duration of this begins with An. Dom. 758, and extends to the fall of the Saracens, in relation to that part of it that concerns the Saracens, about the year 1060. But in as far as it relates to the popish antichristian party, it is continued down through the next trumpet and the last both. But seeing the Saracens are brought in here as a scourge to the worshippers of the beast, the Turks succeeding them in this work, therefore the trumpet is denominated from this visible scene of affairs, and we must accordingly suppose that it ends with them.

The sixth trumpet, therefore, which is called the second wo, brings in the Turks upon the stage of the Roman empire, who are represented as four angels, or messengers of judgment, Chap. xiii. 13, 14, 15, &c. who were bound on the other side of the river Euphrates for some time, but are now let loose to pass that river, and make their inroads into the Roman empire, and to erect themselves into a monarchy upon the ruins of it. Now they are called four angels, because they were then divided into four sultanies or principalities, as their ambassadors told the Emperor Justin, in the year 570, as is related by one of the Byzantine historians, and taken notice of by all writers on this head^a: For, at their remarkable passing the river Euphrates, they were under the command of Solyman Shahum and his three sons; and when he was drowned in the passage, they brought themselves under four other captains, viz. Otrogules, and his three sons; of whom one was the famous Ottoman, who a little after laid the foundation of that great empire over which his family keeps the mastery to this day. They are described as horsemen, for so they generally were, fighting on horseback for the most part; of which the horse's tail is still a monument, bearing

^a See Pocock's supplem. ad Abul-phar, pag 106, 108. and Leclav. hist. pag. 86.

used as their chief ensign of honour and command. Their number was prodigious, and might be at that time perhaps exactly two hundred thousand thousand, as it seems to be here asserted; for they seldom sent out an army of fewer than a thousand thousand fighting men at once. Their polished breast-plates represented fire, when shone upon by the sun; and their horses are said to be like lions for fierceness. And seeing fire arms began then to be used in war, of which they had great store, together with cannon of prodigious bigness, which did facilitate their taking of cities, and particularly of Constantinople, their shooting these on horseback is represented as if the fire and smoke and brimstone had come out of the horses mouths, their pieces being discharged over their heads. With these they killed the bodies of men, and with their tails, which had heads also, they killed the souls of those poor creatures that were stung or bit with their poisonous doctrines; in so much that the third part of men, i. e. the third part of the ancient Roman empire, (viz. that part which fell to Constantius, when Constantine divided the whole among his three sons), was destroyed and conquered by them. Now, if we inquire into the time of this trumpet, we have an exact calculation given of it. For they are said to be "prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." An hour being ever used indefinitely in this book for a season or period of time, we are accordingly to take it here. But days, years, and months being used definitely always, we must likewise interpret them so here also. So that the sense of the place is, "that the Turks were loosed from Euphrates, as being prepared instruments in the hand of God, for the ruin of the Grecian empire, for a certain hour or season; even for a day, and a month, and a year." For in that period of time, they destroyed the eastern empire. For a prophetic year being 360,

and a month 30; these, with the addition of one more, make up the period of 391 years. Now we took notice before, that, in or about the year 1067, i. e. 1062 of prophetical reckoning, Tangrolipix erected the Turkish empire upon the ruins of that of the Saracens. From thence, therefore, if we compute the 391 years, we are led down to the year 1458, according to our ordinary computation; but, according to prophetical reckoning, to the remarkable year 1453, when Mahomet the Great took Constantinople, and so erected his own empire upon the ruins of the Grecian. For, as it is very remarkable that John does not make the period of 391 years to be the whole duration of the Turkish empire, but only its preparation for an after-action, from its first rise to its highest exaltation; so we see how exactly this is fulfilled in the event; which therefore I hope is no unedifying speculation.

Now, seeing there is a remarkable stop and void, as it were, between the end of the sixth trumpet and the beginning of the seventh, which is filled up with the account of the slaying of the witnesses, in chap. xii. I do humbly conceive, that whatever particular slaughters of the saints were before ~~or~~ may be afterwards, the great slaughter must have been ~~during~~ that interval of time. For this could not be during the height of the two former woes upon Antichrist and his followers. And much less can it be supposed to be after the sound of the seventh trumpet, and while God's last plagues upon the beast are a pouring out. I do therefore reckon, that the witnesses who prophesied in sackcloth from the beginning of Papal superstitions, were the honest Piemontois, Albigenes and Waldenses; who were slain at length, after they had stood the shock of all former attacks, particularly that of Simon Monfort with his 500,000 Croissades, whom Innocent the III. diverted from the Saracen war, in order to extirpate that good people

people, about the year 1200. Now the slaying of these witnesses began in the year 1416, when John Huss, and afterward Jerom of Prague were burnt, but came [not to its height until the Bohemian Calixtines complied with the council of Basil, an. 1434, after which the faithful Taborites were totally ruined, as well as their brethren in Piedmont, France, &c. which happened about the year 1492. For they being destroyed, the Calixtines were no better than the dead carcases (as they are called, v. 8.) or corps of the former living witnesses, over which the popish party did triumph: for they looked upon them as standing trophies of their victory, and therefore did not think fit to kill them further, or bury them out of their sight. For it is said, v. 7, 8. "that after they had finished their testimony, the beast did make war upon them, *καὶ ἀποκτείνῃ αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν*, &c." he killed them, and their corps also, (for the additional words in our version, shall ly, are not in the original, and do but mar the sense,) or their bodies (for some readings have it *σώματα*,) in the street of the great city, *i. e.* in Bohemia, one street of the Papal dominions, or the Great City Rome, in a large sense. For I find that towards the end of the fifteenth century the witnesses were in a manner wholly extinct. For * Comenius tells us, that about the year 1467, the Waldenses in Austria and Moravia had complied so far, as to dissemble their religion, and turn to popery in profession and outward compliance. The Taborites † in the mean time, upon their refusing to do so, were so destroyed that it was much that seventy of them could get together, to consult about continuing their church, and about finding out some qualified person to be their minister, for they had none left, an. 1467. And so low was the

* Hist. Pers. Eccl. Bohem. ch. 20. sect. 4. 5. p. 70, 71.

† Ibid. ch. 20. sect. 3.

Church of Christ then, that when the hidden remains of the Taborites, who were called Speculani from their lurking in dens and caves, sent out four men (as the same author relates in another * book) to travel one through Greece and the East, another to Russia and the North, a third to Thrace, Bulgaria, and the neighbouring places, and a fourth to Asia, Palestine and Egypt: they did all indeed safely return to their brethren, but with this sorrowful news, that they found no church of Christ that was pure or free from the grossest errors, superstition and idolatry. This was in the year 1497: And when they sent two of their number two years afterwards, viz. Luke Prage and Thomas German, to go into Italy, France and other places, to see if there were any of the old Waldenses left alive: they returned with the same melancholy news as the former had done, that they could neither find nor hear of any remaining, only they were informed of the martyrdom of Savanarolla, who suffered in the year 1498, and they were told of some remains of the Piemontois that were scattered and hid among the Alps, but nobody knew where. Now a few years after this, even the few remains of the Taborites were found out and persecuted, hardly any escaping; so that A. C. 1510, six suffered together publicly, and the year following that famous martyr Andreas Paliwka, who, I think, was the last of that period. From whose death, in the end of the year 1521, or beginning of 1522, to the dawning of the reformation by the first preaching of Carolastadius and Zuinglius, (who appeared at least a year before Luther, as * Hottinger and others tell us), there was only about three years and a half, which answers as near as can be to the

* Comenius in his short history of the Bohemian church, prefixed to his exhortation to the church of England, sect. 66. p. 40.

* Hist. Reform. vol. 1.

three days and a half of the unburied state of the witnesses. So that the spirit's entering into the witnesses, v. 11. began with the year 1516, if not the year before, though this appeared most remarkably when Luther opposed the pope publicly, an. 1517. They were not only enlivened, but (to explain the words of John, v. 11. a little further) they rose up upon their feet an. 1529, when so many princes and free cities in Germany protested against the edict of Worms and Spire, and so got the name of protestants. They heard a voice from heaven, saying, v. 12. ascend hither, *i. e.* to power and peace; when Maurice of Saxony beat the emperor Charles an. 1552. And accordingly they did after that ascend to the heaven of honour, rest and security, as if they had been waisted up by a cloud, and that in the sight even of their enemies; when the protestant religion was established and legally settled and allowed of in the year 1555, which was continued and confirmed by Maximilian and Ruloph afterwards. In whose days the church began to be settled in several countries, viz. in England, Scotland, Denmark, Swedeland, Switzerland and the Low Countries. Now it is observable that in this period of time, when the witnesses finished their testimony, or were about to do so, the Turks took Constantinople, an. 1453, which I take to be designed by the earthquake that destroyed the tenth part of the Roman dominions, v. 13. for the Grecian empire was reduced before that from being the third part of that empire, to be the tenth part only. So that Mahomet's prevailing over the Greek church, and the pope's conquests over the western Christians was much about a time, and therefore said to be in the same hour or period of time, *i. e.* before the sixth trumpet ended, and before the seventh began; for the sixth trumpet is the hour of the Turkish woe. And indeed their triumph was much of the same kind also. For, as the papists

triumphed only over the dead bodies of the witnesses, *i. e.* over the Calixtines (who were no longer living witnesses, the Taborites being all gone, and having overcome their enemies by their blood and the word of their testimony), so the Turkish triumph was only over seven thousand names of men, *i. e.* over the remaining eastern Christians, who were so degenerated in all respects, that they were only names or shadows of true Christians. Only, whereas, the Grecians did yet own themselves to be the same in profession with their ancestors, and so were the same with them as to name, the Calixtines were even debarred that privilege.

These things being therefore considered, (which I could easily enlarge upon, were I not confined at this time), I think it is abundantly plain, that the great slaughter of the witnesses must have been precisely at the time I have mentioned. For it could not be till Antichrist was at his highest pitch of power and grandeur, which was not before this time. And it was not possible that it should be after the seventh trumpet sounded, and the vials began to be poured out: Seeing the witnesses were not only risen then, but were the instruments of this last and greatest war to the worshippers of the beast. And, therefore, we find, chap. 11. v. 14, 15, &c. that as soon as the witnesses arose, the second war ended, and the third commenced in the begun exaltation of the saints and servants of God. And it is to me altogether inconceivable, that the witnesses should be risen, and the antichristian interest decline; and yet that the witnesses should be intirely cut off during such a period; so, that I am almost bold on this head, though I am resolved to propose my apocalyptical thoughts only by way of probable conjecture, to affirm, that it is impossible, morally speaking, that the witnesses can ever be so intirely slain, as they have been before, whatever particular and

provincial

provincial persecutions they may be under for a time, and whatever formidable appearances there may be against the protestant interest every where. Against this assertion I can foresee no objection of moment, excepting one; and this is, "That seeing the witnesses are said to prophesy all the 1260 days of the beast's reign in sackcloth, and to be slain only when they have finished their testimony, v. 3, 7: it seems therefore very strange to say, that they shall be slain during the time of their 1260 days or years prophecy, and so long before the end of them." To which I answer, that in the third verse there are two things spoken of, with respect to the opposers of Antichrist. The first is, that they are called witnesses or martyrs, against the abominations of that enemy: And, the second is, that they are said to preach or prophesy against that interest. Now, it is only in the second sense, that they are spoken of in relation to the whole 1260 days. So that, though the *μαρτυρία*, or witness-bearing of the saints continue in a large and general sense, for 1260 years, and that for the most part in sackcloth, because of the constant troubles they meet with from that restless enemy, yet their *μαρτυρία*, or witness-bearing by martyrdom and sufferings, in a strict and proper sense, relates only to the time of their low and obscure state during the rage of the papists, before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Now, it is not said, though perhaps this was never taken notice of before, that the witnesses were killed after their whole prophecy or preaching was over, or after the 1260 days were run out: but only, "that after their *μαρτυρία*, or testimony for Christ by suffering was over, that then, I say, they were universally slain and cut off," v. 7. Now, though there have been many persecutions since the reformation, and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, yet they were never universal ones. Besides, that the difference is great between

tween the witnesses before and since that time, in this respect; for since Luther's appearing, our religion has been established publicly in several nations, and authorized by law, in opposition to popery, which it never was before. But to proceed,

The seventh trumpet sounds, chap. 11. 14, &c. immediately upon the end of the sixth, i. e. upon the rising of the witnesses. Now, as the 13 and 14 chapters are but further representations of the state of affairs under the six trumpets preceding, relating to the condition, both of the church and antichristian party; so the 15 and 16 chapters are preliminary to the period of the seven vials being poured out upon the papacy and its dominions; of which visions I have a great many things to say; but I must curb my self now, lest I prove too tedious. I shall, therefore, only put you in mind of what I hinted before, that the seventh trumpet comprehends the seven vials. For these are but the part of it, which gradually destroy the papal interest, which had increased under the former trumpets. As therefore this period brings in reformation, and by various steps makes the kingdoms of the world, which before were under Antichrist, to change so far and so wonderfully as to become the kingdoms of God and Christ, chap. 11. 14, &c. So after a general but glorious account of the state of the church from the reformation, chap. 14. and a general account of the vials to be poured out on the popish party during the same period, chap. 15. we have a distinct account of the pouring out of these seven vials, chap. 16. in obedience to the great voice out of the temple, v. 1. which is but a repetition of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, chap. 11. 12. under a new representation of it.

The third and last septenary, therefore, is that of the vials, or last plagues and judgments upon Rome papal: which

which, as far as I can, I shall explain, by a distinct account of such of them, as I reckon to be fulfilled, and by some new conjectures upon the remaining ones.

But before I proceed to the particular consideration of these, there are two things which I would premise. The first is, that as the trumpets did raise Antichrist up, and the vials must pull him down; so there is a wonderful relation that the latter bear to the former, especially the four first ones. For the first trumpet and first vial bring judgments on the earth, the second trumpet and vial on the sea, the third trumpet and vials on the rivers, and the fourth trumpet and vial on the sun. The second is this, that seeing the vials do suppose a struggle and war between the popish and reformed parties; every vial is to be looked upon as the event and conclusion of some new periodical attack of that first party upon this other; the issue of which proves at length favourable to the latter against the former. Which seeing it is the most noble and remarkable part of the period that the vial relates to, is therefore that which denominates the period itself; even as the conquest of Pompey by Cæsar, and of Antony by Augustus, suppose their wars before, and give the denomination to their governments. These things being premised, I now proceed:

“The first vial which fell upon the earth, to the tormenting of the subjects of the beast,” chap. 16. 2. doth denote God’s judgments upon the foundation of the papal power; the earth being that on which we walk and build our houses, and out of whose womb we are maintained. So that by this I understand the popish clergy, and the papal dominions and revenues as they are upheld by them. This therefore began with the reformation, and continued until the time that the popish factors and trumpets were thrown out of as many countries of Europe as embraced

embraced the reformation. And we may easily conceive what a mortification this was to that party, when the pretended sanctity of their priests, monks, and nuns, was found to be mere cheat, and their miracles nothing else but lies or legerdemain; and when their tales of purgatory were exposed to public contempt, and their pardons or indulgences would sell no longer; and consequently, when the Pope and his red-hatted and mitred officers, saw themselves driven out of so great a part of their dominions, their seminaries for breeding their motley soldiers of all denominations and orders pulled down, and so much of their yearly revenues lost. Whence they are said to fall under a noisome and grievous ulcer, or sore; being thereby way pained and vexed inwardly, and rendered contemptible to the whole world, that looked upon them as no better than vermin, and the plagues of mankind. So that this vial began with the rise of Zuinglius and Luther, and the other reformers, in the year 1516, and 1517, and continued to the year 1566, i. e. about forty years; for against that time all the reformed churches were settled, and had published their creeds and confessions against Rome, in opposition to the determinations of the popish council of Trent, published an. 1563, and the creed of Pope Pius the IV. which added twelve Antichristian articles to the twelve primitive Christian ones, which was put out, A. C. 1564.

The second vial, ver. 3. must therefore begin where the other ended, as to the period of time that commences from thence. Now I find, that in the year 1566, the wars between the king of Spain, and the states of the Netherlands began, when the latter got the nickname of *Geuzen*. And though the Spaniards were often victorious at first, yet they were at length forced to declare them free states. It was then that the sea became blood to the Romanists

their votaries being miserably defeated in their expectations. For after their cruelties under the duke of Alva, in the Low countries, and their massacres of the Protestants in France and other places, the scene was changed very quickly. So that A. C. 1588, the Spaniards lost their vast armada, and ever after decline in their power. And the Duke of Guise, the inveterate enemy of the Protestants, was killed the same year. And A. C. 1598, died Philip the II. of Spain, being eaten up of lice: the edict of Nantz being given out the same year in France in favour of the Protestants. So that, as the reformed interest was in peace every where, and conquered in Holland and England; the popish party on the other hand saw Spain, the late terror of the Protestants, brought to a languishing condition, and their allies weary of wars and persecutions. And, as the year 1609, the truce was made between the Spaniards and the Dutch; so the war, though renewed and carried on afterwards, became languid and faint, so as hardly to be felt or minded by either party, especially the Dutch, who were for the most part victorious and successful. So that, as the period of this vial began, an. 1566, we reckon it continued about fifty years, *viz.* to the year 1617; seeing we shall find that the third vial did begin then. For,

The third vial, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7, was poured out upon the rivers and fountains of water, or of those territories of the papacy, which were as necessary to it as rivers and fountains are to a country, being as it were the former vial continued as to the kind of the plague. For, as the former destroyed the living creatures; or living souls that were in or upon the sea, *viz.* the Spaniards, the great masters of the world at that time, as to their marine power; who, after the year 1588, lost their former sovereignty of the seas to the English and Dutch; so this latter plague

plague makes it difficult for the popish party to subside and keep their ground even in the inland country, and several dominions of Germany, and the neighbouring places. For, in the year 1617, Ferdinand being forced upon the Bohemians by the emperor Matthias, and crowned king; the foundation of new quarrels was laid this way. For a little while after, another most bloody religious war ensued, which shook all the empire, and frightened Europe. And though the Protestants lost Bohemia, the Palatinate in part, and were driven out of Moravia, Austria, and Silesia, at this time, and were not only persecuted in many places, but like to be extirpated and rooted out universally; yet the tide turned all on a sudden. For, after the emperor had ruled Germany with a veteran army, for a considerable time, Gustavus Adolphus enters Germany in the year 1630, and conquers every where. And though he was killed about two years after, yet his army continued victorious, until at length all things were accommodated at the peace of Munster, A. C. 1648; which, therefore, the period of the third vial must be supposed to end, which consists of thirty-one years. Now, as this began with persecutions against, and cruelties upon the Protestants, so at length "the angel of the waters is heard to give thanks for making the Papists drink of their own blood at last." Which song of praise another angel falls in with, and says amen too. All which seems to denote the joy both of the Protestant state and church upon the success of the Swedish arms against the emperor.

The fourth vial comes now to be considered. And as this is poured out upon the son of the papal kingdom ver. 8. so the effect of it is "Mens being scorched or burned with fire, which yet does not make them turn to God, but blaspheme his name the more," as we may see ver. 9. Now as, this vial must begin where the other

ends

ends, viz. at or a little after the year 1648: So I cannot see, but it must denote the wars that followed the peace of Munster, with other incidental occurrences. Now we find that the French hostilities and wars in Flanders began about this time. And though this fire seemed to be quenched by the Pyrenean peace, about ten years after that of Munster; yet this proved rather fuel to the flame, which broke out with more violence than before, by the seizure of Lorain, the new conquests of the French in Burgundy and Flanders, and the wars upon Germany, and invasion on the Low Countries. To which we may add the French king's quarrels with several Popes about the restitution of Castro, the rights of the duke of Modena, the affair of Corsi, and about the regale and the Franchises. Now, seeing the bombarding of towns and cities was chiefly made use of in these latter wars, we may see how properly the scorching or burning men from above, (as if the sun had sent down fire and heat from his own body) is made use of to characterize the time of this vial. But the chief thing to be taken notice of here, is, that the sun and other luminaries of heaven, are the emblem of princes and kingdoms, as we took notice of before. Therefore, the pouring out of this vial on the sun, must denote the humiliation of some eminent potentates of the Römish interest, whose influence and countenance, cherish and support the papal cause. And these, therefore, must be principally understood of the houses of Austria and Bourbon, though not exclusively of other popish princes. Now, it is not unusual with God to make his enemies crush and weaken one another. And thus I suppose this vial is to be understood, when it is said, that upon the pouring of it out on the sun, power was given to him, i. e. the sun, (as most understand the words from the connection) to scorch men with fire. And this is plain, in what of the

vial is fulfilled, and will be perhaps more so afterwards. As therefore, France was made use of, in the instances given, to vex and scorch the Austrian family, in both branches of it; so afterwards was he himself tormented when he saw himself forced to leave Holland, which he was so near surprizing, an. 1672, and especially, when he was forced to resign all his conquests in Flanders, by the late peace of Ryfwick. It is true, he seems now to have got more glory than ever, by the accession of his grandson to the Spanish monarchy: But, then this is by an eclipse upon the Austrian family, which is expired in the first branch of it. And who knows, but this advancement may lay the foundation of the ruin or decay of the French power, by exhausting that kingdom, both as to men and money, in defence of a weak monarchy? In the mean time, we see this vial has already taken place, in darkening the glory of king James, (whom the Papiſts expected new conquests from), by the hand of king William by whom also, God put a stop to the career of the French monarch, in his conquests in Flanders, and on the Rhine. And, we see it further poured out, in the eclipse of the Austrian family, by the loss of Spain and its dependent principalities, as also, in defeating the wicked designs of the three confederate monarchs, of Poland, Denmark, and Russia.

And now seeing I have marked out the time we are in at present, it is time also to put a stop to our apocalyptic thoughts, seeing no man can pretend, upon any just grounds, to calculate future times. However, seeing I have come so far, I shall adventure to present you further with some conjectural thoughts on this head, for I am far from the presumption of some men, to give them any higher character.

Now my conjectures shall relate to two things, viz. To

the remaining part of this vial, and to the other vials that follow this.

And, 1st, as to the remaining part of this vial, I do humbly suppose that it will come to its highest pitch about anno 1717, and that it will run out about the year 1794. The reasons for the first conjecture are two:—The first is, because I find that the papal kingdom got a considerable accession to its power upon the Roman Western empire's being destroyed anno 475, to which the Heruli succeeded the year following, and the Ostrogoths afterwards. Now, if from this remarkable year we begin the calculation of the 1260 years, they lead us down to A. C. 1735, which, in prophetic account, is this very year 1717. The 2d is, because, as I have many years ago observed, this year leads us down to a new centenary revolution. For is it observable that John Huss and Jerome of Prague, to run this up no further, were burned anno 1417? after which the true religion in Bohemia and other places was more and more obscured and suppressed, until that famous year 1517, when Luther arose, and gave the revolution a new resurrection, according to that remarkable prediction of Jerome of Prague, *Centum annis revolutis Deo respondebitis et mihi*, which the Bohemians afterwards stamped upon their coin as their motto. From this year the reformed did still increase, whatever particular stops and troubles it met with, till the year 1617, about which time the German and Bohemian wars began to break out; and it is but too obvious what an ebb hath followed from that time to this, notwithstanding the pouring out of the second, third, and fourth vials. So that there is ground to hope, that about the beginning of another such century things may again alter for the better: for I cannot but hope that some new mortification of the chief supporters of Antichrist will then happen, and perhaps the French monarchy

may begin to be considerably humbled about that time; that whereas the present French king takes the sun for his emblem, and this for his motto, *Nec pluribus impar*, he may at length, or rather his successors, and the monarchy itself, at least before the year 1794, be forced to acknowledge, that in respect to neighbouring potentates, he is even *singulis impar*.

But as to the expiration of this vial, I do fear it will not be until the year 1794. The reason of which conjecture is this; that I find the Pope got a new foundation of Exaltation, when Justinian, upon his conquest of Italy, left it in a great measure to the pope's management, being willing to eclipse his own authority, to advance that of this haughty prelate. Now this being in the year 552; this, by the addition of the 1260 years reaches down to the year 1811; which, according to prophetic account, is the year 1794*. And then I do suppose the fourth vial will end, and the fifth commence, by a new mortification of the papacy, after this vial has lasted 148 Years: which indeed is long, in comparison with the former vials; but if it be considered in relation to the fourth, fifth, and sixth Trumpets, it is but short, seeing the fourth lasted 190 years, the fifth 302, and the sixth 393.

And now, my friends, I may be well excused, if I venture no further, in giving you any more conjectural thoughts

NOTE BY THE PUBLISHER.

In calculating the difference betwixt the prophetic and syderal year, (see p. 19.), our author reckons the latter, according to the gross computation, to be only 365 days, not regarding, as he says "the smaller measures of time." But the fact is, that a complete annual revolution of the sun exceeds that calculation by several hours and minutes: a syderal year being 365 days, 6 hours, and about 10 minutes. In 1278 years, therefore, there will be a difference of about $328\frac{1}{2}$ days, or nearly one whole year; so that the great event, predicted by our author, will fall out one year sooner than by his calculation, viz. in the year 1793, which brings it still nearer to the present time.

thoughts upon this present period of time. But seeing I pretend to give my speculations of what is future, no higher character than guesses, I shall still venture to add something to what I have already said. Therefore be pleased, 1. to call to mind, what I premised to the consideration of the seven vials, as the 2d preliminary, viz. that seeing the vials do (all of them) suppose a struggle or war between the popish and reformed parties: "Every vial is to be looked upon, as the event and conclusion of some new periodical attack of that first party upon this other; the issue of which proves at length favourable to the latter against the former." For if this be duly considered, it will let us see, that great declining of the protestant interest for some time, and great and formidable advances and new degrees of increase in the Romish party, are very consistent with the state of both these opposite interests under the vials. For, as Rome pagan was gradually ruined under the seals, under many of which it seemed to increase to outward observation, and to become more rampant than before, when yet it was indeed declining: So must we suppose it will be with Rome papal. For monarchies as they rise gradually and insensibly, so do they wear out so likewise. And therefore we must not entertain such Chimerical notions of the fall of the papacy, as if it were to be accomplished speedily or miraculously; as many have done. For as it rose insensibly and step by step; so it must fall in like manner. But to illustrate this further, as to what of the vials is yet unfulfilled, by what is past; let us look back on the two preceding vials. The second vial therefore began with a formidable attack upon the protestants by the growth of the Austrian family, from the year 1566, to the year 1588; during all which time the vial seemed rather to be poured out on the protestants than papists. But as there must be a war, to denote a victory:

so it was in this case. So that the vial was seen at last in its effect upon the Austrian party, from An. 1588 to 1598, and afterwards to 1617. For it is with the church, as it is with particular Christians : who are often sorely buffeted by Satan, and sometimes brought even to extremities by temptations ; but do ever carry the victory at last. Who would have believed that the Christian church was about to triumph over the Roman pagan Empire, when the dreadful persecution under Dioclesian and his collegiate emperors was at its highest pitch ? But the darkest time of the night ushers in the dawning of the church's day, in the usual way of God's providence over the same. And this is very conspicuously to be observed in the period of the third vial. Who would have thought that the loss of Bohemia, and the emperor Ferdinand's ruling all Germany with a formidable army, were like to issue in the victories of the Swedish arms, and the future security of the protestant interest through the empire and elsewhere ? So that, we must not wonder if for 16 years the house of Bourbon be raised up to be a further terror and scourge to the world, and to protestant nations particularly. And as a confirmation of this conjecture, let it be considered, in the second place (besides what I hinted before on this head) that it is something very extraordinary, and peculiar in some sense to this vial, " that the sun, upon which it is poured out, should yet be made the executor of the judgment of it on others, at the same time that he is tormented with it himself." So that whosoever is denoted by the sun here (as I suppose the house of Bourbon principally is) is made use of, as the Devil is, both to torment others, and to be tormented himself in so doing. And if the King of France therefore be denoted by this principally, I fear he is yet to be made use of, in the hand of God, as Nebuchadnezzar was of old against the Jews, viz. as a

further

further severe scourge to the protestant churches every where. And, besides this characteristical mark, which seems to forebode his further exaltation and our humiliation; there is yet a third thing, that I cannot but think upon with dread and trembling of heart, viz. that it is further said, "that while this sun of the popish world is running his fatal and dreadful career, and scorching men with fire, they are so far from being bettered by these judgments, that they go on more and more to blaspheme the name of God, who has power over these plagues." And while this continues to be the state of the protestant world, and while atheism, deism, socinianism, irreligion, profaneness, scepticism, formality, hatred of godliness, and a bitter persecuting spirit continue and increase among us; what can we expect but new and desolating judgments? For, while we continue to walk thus contrary to God, we cannot but expect that he should walk contrary to us also. It is in vain for us to boast of our privileges, or plead exemption from judgments on this account. For where there is no national reformation and repentance, national sins are like to pull down miseries upon us, so much the sooner and more certainly, that we have been so singularly and peculiarly privileged. For we may in this case expect that God will say to us, as to the Israelites of old, "You have I specially known and chosen above all the families or nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you more certainly and more severely than any other kingdom or nation." And therefore if we go on in sin, as we have hitherto done, let us take heed to ourselves, lest vengeance be near. I pray God I may be mistaken in my fears. But I am afraid I have but too just reason to turn prophet here, by applying to ourselves, what Peter said to those of his time: The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God, Though I do also conclude with him, "that

“ that if it begin at us, dreadful will be the end of our enemies at last. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly appear? Wherefore if we be called to suffer for our holy religion, let us do so according to the will of God, committing the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as to a faithful creator.” And I wish my conjecture be not found to be more than a mere guess, that for about 16 years our Romish enemies may prevail more and more. Though how far these may be lengthened out or shortened, we can only conjecturally judge of, from the future carriage of the reformed churches, under the circumstances that may be stated afterwards. If any say, that these are melancholy conjectures: I must tell them I cannot help the matter; for I must follow the thread of the text and the aspect of the times. If they ask, but when will the tide turn for the protestant church? I answer, when they turn more universally to God, and no sooner. But if they enquire further, whether the sun of the popish kingdom is not to be eclipsed himself at length? I must positively assert he will; else this vial were not a judgment upon him and the Romish party. But if yet again the question be, when this is to fall out and how? I must tell you, that, I have nothing further to add to what I have said, as to the time. But as to the manner, how this is to be done, our text does lay a foundation of some more distinct thoughts. Therefore in the fourth and last place, we may justly suppose, that the French monarchy, after it has scorched others, will itself consume by doing so; its fire, and that which is the fuel that maintains it, wasting insensibly, till it be exhausted at last towards the end of this century, as the Spanish monarchy did before, towards the end of the sixteenth age. And if we do now heartily and unanimously enter upon a war against France, with the assistance of the Allies, and be but vigorous and faithful in the prosecution of it, securing the source of money and trea-

sure

sure in the heart of America, and bringing the war into the bowels of a nation, where a young monarch is hardly established: I say, if we do this, without losing our opportunities, our peace and security may yet be lengthened out. Whereas if we suffer ourselves to be lulled asleep at this time, we may have cause to lament our not having improved our season. But seeing I am not called to give my advice one way or other, I shall leave the determination of such weighty matters to the wisdom of national councils. However as my duty is to pray for direction unto these; so I earnestly wish, that there may be nothing to stop the regular and secure procedure of public matters in this critical juncture; upon the wise improvement of which our future stability and peace does so much depend. And now after all this, I desire ye may consult a book I formerly published, called the rod or the sword, or the present dilemma of these nations. For ye will there see more fully my thoughts of our times, and how the moral reasons given there, taken from the aspect of our age, though preached in 1692, and published the year following, do exactly agree with my present apocalyptical thoughts.

One thing only I shall further take notice of here, upon the occasion of the King of Spain's death; that God seems to mark out great things sometimes by very minute ones, such as names, *e. g.* as the Spanish monarchy began with Charles the 5th, (as to the Austrian family), so it has now expired in one of the same name: Which I the rather observe, because of many instances of the same kind. Of which number take these following: Darius the Mede, as Daniel calls him, (though Xenophon calls him Cyaxares), the Uncle of Cyrus, was the first Medo-Persian monarch, after the destruction of the Babylonian; and Darius Codomannus was the last. Ptolemeus Lagi began the Egyptian kingdom after Alexander's death, and Ptolemeus Dionysius

Dionysius was the last of that race. Augustus fixed the Roman empire, and it ended in Augustulus. The eastern Roman empire was erected by Constantine the great, and expired with Constantine Paleologus. The Scots race came into England in a James, and has gone out in another of that name. And whether William, the third king of England of that name, as well as the third William Prince of Orange, be likely to be the last both these ways, is left to future time to unriddle. Only I pray that God may long preserve him, and us by him: And may he live to be a further scourge to France, and a terror to Romanists.

But second to proceed with my other conjectures relating to the remaining vials: I do further suppose that,

The fifth vial, ver. 10, 11. which is to be poured out on the seat of the beast, or the dominions that more immediately belong to, and depend upon the Roman see; that, I say, this judgment will probably begin about the year 1794 and expire about A. C. 1848. So that the duration of it upon this supposition, will be for the space of 54 years. For I do suppose, that seeing the pope received the title of supreme bishop no sooner than An. 606, he cannot be supposed to have any vial poured upon his seat immediately (so as to ruin his authority so signally as this judgment must be supposed to do) until the year 1848, which is the date of the 1260 years in prophetic account, when they are reckoned from An. 606. But yet we are not to imagine that this vial will totally destroy the papacy (tho' it will exceedingly weaken it) for we find this still in being and alive, when the next vial is poured out.

The sixth vial, ver. 12, &c. will be poured out upon the Mahometan Antichrist, as the former on the papacy. And seeing the sixth trumpet brought the Turks from beyond Euphrates, from crossing which river they date their rise.

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This sixth vial dries up their waves, and exhausts their power, as the means and way to "prepare and dispose the eastern kings and kingdoms to renounce their heathenish and Mahometon errors, in order to their receiving and embracing Christianity." For I think this is the native import of the text, and not that the Jews are to be understood under this denomination of the kings of the East; which is such an odd straining of it to serve a turn, as I cannot admit of. Now seeing this vial is to destroy the Turks, we hear of three unclean spirits like frogs or toads, that were sent out by Satan, and the remains of the polity and church of Rome, called the beast and the false prophet, in order to insinuate upon the eastern nations, upon their deserting Mahometism, to fall in with their idolatrous and spurious Christianity, rather than with the true reformed doctrine. And these messengers shall be so successful, as to draw these eastern kings and their subjects, and with them the greatest part of mankind; to take part with them. So that by the assistance of these their agents and missionaries they shall engage the whole world, in some manner, to join with them in rooting out the saints. (And here in a parenthesis Christ gives a watchword to his servants to be upon their guard in this hour of trial, ver. 15.) But when the Pope has got himself at the head of this vast army, and has brought them to the place of battle, called, Armageddon (i. e. the place where there will be a most diabolical, cunning and powerful conspiracy against Christ's followers;) then immediately doth the seventh angel pour out his vial, to their ruin and destruction.

The seventh vial therefore being poured out on the air, ver. 17. brings down thunder, lightning, hail and storms; which together with a terrible earthquake destroys all the Antichristian nations, and particularly Rome, or mystical Babylon. And as Christ concluded his sufferings on the cross

cross with his voice, It is finished ; so the churches sufferings are concluded with a voice out of the temple of heaven, and from the throne of God and Christ there, saying, It is done. And therefore with this doth the blessed millennium of Christ's spiritual reign on earth begin ; of which, and what may be supposed to follow, we took some notice above.

Now seeing these two vials are, as it were, " one continued, the first running into the second, and the second completing the first ;" the one giving us an account of the beast's preparations for warring against the saints, and the other shewing the event of the whole: There is no need to give you any conjectures about the conclusion of the sixth vial, or the beginning of the last ; only you may observe, that the first of these will probably take up most of the time between the year 1848, and the year 2000 ; because such long messages and intrigues (besides the time spent before in destroying the Turkish empire) and preparations for so universal a war, must needs take up a great many years: Whereas our blessed Lord seems to tell us, that the destruction of all those his enemies will be accomplished speedily, and in a little time, in comparison of the other vial. Supposing then that the Turkish monarchy should be totally destroyed between 1848, and 1900, we may justly assign 70 or 80 years longer to the end of the sixth seal, and but 20 or 30 at most to the last. Now how great and remarkable this last destruction of the papal Antichrist will be, we may guess by that representation of it chap. 14. 19. 20. where it is set forth under the " emblem and character of the great wine-press of the wrath of God" (which can refer to nothing properly but the event of the seventh vial, as I might shew at large had I time.) Now this " wine-press is said to be trodden without the city (*viz.* of Jerusalem or the church, seeing this is called the city, in scripture style,

as Rome is called the great city) in Armageddon, Rev. 16. 16. which may bear allusion to the valley of decision, Joel 3. 2, 12, 14. However the greatness of this slaughter appears in this, that the blood is represented to flow in such a current as to reach even to the horse-bridles, viz. of the servants of God, employed in this execution: for without doubt this relates to what we have chap. 19. 14. which I beseech you to compare with this place, For ye will find that a large account is given of the fall of Babylon, chap. 18. and "of the trumpet of the church upon her final victory over this enemy," chap. 19. 1, &c. And among other things spoken of relating to the battle and victory obtained at Armageddon, ye have this account of the general and his victorious army, v. 11, &c. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat on him was called faithful and true,—and he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood, and his name is called the word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses.—And he treaded the wine-presses of the fierceness and wrath of God.—And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to fight with him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast and the false prophet were taken,—and both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." And now to return to the representation of this slaughter, by the wine-press of blood, chap. 14. 20. it is further said of it, that it "flowed to the height of the horse-bridles, for the space or extent of 1600 furlongs. So that Armageddon seems to be denoted here, in the extent of it, as the field of battle, which is now turned into a field of blood. Now what place can we imagine to be so

properly meant by this as the territory of the see of Rome in Italy, which (as Mr Joseph Mede, who first made this observation, says) from the city of Rome to the furthest mouth of the river Po and the Marshes of Verona, is extended the space of 200 Italian miles, that is exactly 1600 furlongs; the Italian mile consisting of 8 furlongs. Now the Hebrew word Armageddon or Harmageddon may be justly derived from אֲרִמַּגְדוֹן , which signifies both a malediction or anathema, and a destruction or slaughter, and מַגְדוֹן or more fully צְבָאָה , which signifies an army, or their army. So that both the anathemas darted against the saints by the Romanists, and their armies made use of against them (all which proceeded from Rome papal) may be here alluded to, in the expiration of both their ecclesiastical and temporal interest. So that this conjecture upon the name does confirm that other of Mr Mede, that the *Stata Della Chiesa*, or the territory and possession of Italy belonging to the see of Rome, is the place called Armageddon, where the final destruction of Antichristianism will be.

And now, my friends, I have fulfilled my promise to you, in giving you not only a resolution of the grand apocalyptic question, when the papacy began, and when we may suppose it will end; but some considerable improvement of it, with respect to the knowledge not only of time past, but that particular period we are now under, together with conjectures, and some of them I am sure new and uncommon, about future time. By all which I hope I have given the world such a key to unlock all the characters of the book of the revelation, as I hope I may venture to say, if considered and used impartially, judiciously and diligently, will be found to give some new light to our mental journey through the mazes and turnings and dark passages thereof. And had I not been so constrained, as you may see I have been, I might have cleared

great many other dark things in this prophecy. But, seeing I could not neglect this opportunity, of presenting these thoughts to the world, as a new-year and new ages gift at once : I do therefore hope you will the more easily excuse what may seem dark or defective in this discourse ; as considering how much I am straitned, not only as to the limits of paper that I must keep to, but of time also.

Now, seeing I have already given you a theoretical improvement of the question I have presented you with a resolution of : all that remains is to bring you from speculations and notions to practice, that your thoughts may be so seasoned with a serious and deep sense of your duty and interest, that you may get advantage both by the perusal of my preceding apocalyptical meditations, and the following discourses : That after you have considered the duty of improving your time, which, together with some other things which I am now going to treat of, you may make application to yourselves of what I have said concerning God's dwelling with men upon the earth, so as you yourselves may become temples of the living God ; seeing God hath promised this privilege to all true christians, saying, " I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." 2. Cor. 6. 16. And when you have thus applied to yourselves the first of the following discourses, I hope you will not reckon it lost time to consider what I have said as to the ministerial work, especially the application, as to that part of it at least, which does immediately relate to you and all Christians, as well as ministers ; that this way you may learn to join in with Christ's ordinances for the future, with greater seriousness, and in order to further good than perhaps any of us have yet attained to do. And when you have improved this way also by the perusal of the second discourse, let me desire you to read the last concluding

one, with serious meditation, in order to see the connection and design of the whole. For though it be short, yet it contains much in little, and may be of use to introduce your minds to some further and more distinct apprehension of our holy religion, as it centers in Jesus Christ. And when you have thus perused and considered both this and the following discourses, I am willing you think as meanly of both me and them as you please, upon condition that ye may this way value the holy scriptures more. For, as my design, in all my performances of this kind, is to dig my materials from the fruitful and rich mines of this divine depositum and sacred treasure: So I have no other end than to lead you in there also, that ye may be more and more enriched with the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. In order to this, therefore,

Let me in the second place, suggest something here, by way of a practical improvement of what I have said above, especially as to that part of our discourse which I was last upon, relating to the apocalyptical times and periods, with the transactions of the same, in as far as they concern us. And what I have to say here I shall propose by way of observations, which may be of some use, I hope, both to regulate our thoughts and actions, while we live in this world, in relation to the concerns of the church of God.

The (1.) "Observation is, that it may justly be looked upon as an eminent confirmation of the truth of christianity, that so wonderful an account should be given of the transactions of the world, so long before they came to pass."

The verity of our holy religion is proved from two things principally, *viz.* miracles and prophecy; and both these arguments have been excellently improved by learned men. But yet, as the first of these was perhaps the principal and most convincing topic to those that lived in our Saviour's

Saviour's days: So I look upon the second to be the most considerable to those that live in after ages. Nay we find that Christ himself did not lay the foundation of the belief of his mission on miracles alone, but seemed to build the faith of his disciples chiefly on the Old-Testament prophecies, as he did to the two disciples going to Emaus, Luke 24. 27, &c. And I suppose, it is too plain to need any proof, that the apostles did ever insist upon the prophecies of the Old-Testament, more than either upon Christ's miracles or their own, in order thence to demonstrate that Christ was the Messias. "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," Rev. 19. 10. i. e. (as I understand the words) the spirit of prophecy is the great standing evidence and testimony of the divinity of Christ, and of the verity of his word. And therefore, as the angel argues with John, he only is to be worshipped who is truly God, and who inspires his servants with the gift of knowing things to come.

It has therefore been the work of learned men in all ages, to prove that Christ was the true Messias; and consequently that his institution of religion was truly divine, by shewing how punctually the Old-Testament prophecies were fulfilled in him. But I am much mistaken, if an impartial considerer of the New-Testament prophecies, may not find some things that do almost as plainly characterize several later events, as the ancient prophecies did the former. And of this, let what I have said of the sixth and seventh seal, and fifth and sixth trumpet, and of the slaughter of the witnesses, be taken as instances. Or, if this will not be allowed, let it be considered, that we see the full completion of the Old-Testament prophecies relating to the erection of christianity, whereas we see not the entire fulfilling of the apocalyptic ones. Therefore we must make allowance for the different representation

of the one and the other of these. For they only that shall live after the great battle of Armageddon is over, can see the exact fulfilling of this prophecy in the destruction of Antichrist, with the same advantage they see also the fulfilling of Daniel's visions with respect to the coming of the Messiah and his death. We therefore now have no more advantage, as to time, in explaining and understanding this latter event, than the Jews had as to the first, who lived in the days of the Maccabees, while Daniel's weeks of years were running out. And I question if they then did understand the periods of time they were under, more clearly, if at all so distinctly, as we do the times that have past over the Christian church, and that part of time we are now under. Therefore I say, we have great reason to thank God, that so much of this book is already made so clear to us, as to prove confirming thus far to our faith. For whatever differences have been among the most eminent interpreters of this book, as to particular calculations and accommodations of things: Yet they have all of them agreed in the main foundations of the interpretation thereof, which I have built upon, (excepting Grotius and Hammond, whose hypothesis has had few followers, and will have fewer), as Dr. Cressener has irrefragably proved in his book, intituled, "a Demonstration of the first principles of the Protestant Applications of the Apocalypse." So that there are two things almost equally strange to me, that the Jews should own the verity of the Old-Testament and particularly of Daniel's prophecy, and not see that the Messiah is come; and that the papists should believe the divinity of the New-Testament, and particularly of the revelation, and not see that their church is antichristian. But while I admire the wilful stupidity of both these parties; I cannot but admire also the wisdom of God in making use of both these in his providence

to confirm to us the verity of Christianity, in prophesying both of the one and the other so long before, and in continuing them to this day as standing monuments of the divinity both of the Old and New-Testament. But besides this, there is

A (2d) Observation, that may be of great use to us this way also, is, that this book represents to us, as in a small but exact map, the steadiness and exactness of providence, and Christ's government of the world.

For here we see the various and seemingly confused events of providence so exactly methodized, as to make up one uniform and noble piece: The seeming discords and jarring sounds of things, being so disposed by infinite wisdom, as to make up one perfect harmony. Here piety and wickedness, angels and devils, the church and Antichrist, act various and contrary parts: And yet Christ makes use of all for noble purposes, and carries all on for one great end.

And now, as in other respects, so in this, we may take notice of the perfection of the holy scripture; that what is wanting in history, is made up in prophecy, which in some sense is history also. For if history, in the general notion of it, be an account or relation of the actions of men in the world, prophecy is no less a species of this than that to which the name is most commonly appropriated. For as that is a relation of things past, prophecy is an account of things to come. Now as Daniel makes up the hiatus or defect of the history of the old testament, so the revelation of John supplies that of the new, by leading us down from Christ's first to his second coming.

And here let me observe, that these two books give us the exact plan of a Divine history which never yet was given: the only essay towards something of this kind, that I know of, having been given by a * near and dear friend

* My father in his third part of the fulfilling of scripture, call-

friend of mine. For though there have been many ecclesiastical as well as civil histories written, yet none of these run in the strain of scripture history, where all matters of fact are related not so much in a reference to men as in relation to God, and his providence in governing the world.

A (3.) Observation is this; that we may now, after what I have said, "attain to a distinct view of what part of this prophecy is past, and what remains yet to be fulfilled."

Of this I shall say nothing directly at this time: seeing the preceding scheme I have given of the apocalyptical periods may, I humbly hope, afford you a sufficient thread to regulate and fix your thoughts and meditations in relation to this subject. Only I shall hint some things to you, that are deducible from what I have already said this way.

Therefore, first, let me advise you not to suffer yourselves to be deluded with the specious or confident pretences of some men; when they go about to impose not only upon themselves but upon the world, by their notions relating to the sudden coming of Christ to judge the world, or to the speedy destruction of the papacy: I love to expose no mans weakneses, and I perfectly abhor the way that of late is become modish, to rip up and publish personal failings. And, therefore, I shall neither trample upon the graves of the dead, nor affront the living; as remembering that we do all know in part and prophesy in part only. But, without detracting from others, I do in faithfulness and love desire ye may not suffer yourselves to be imposed upon by a vain imagination that the end of things is at hand, scripture truth confirmed and cleared, by some eminent appearances of God for his church, under the new testament.

is so near, as some both of old and of late have pretended to foresee. For, from the scheme I have given you, ye may easily see, that there are many and great events to fall out before the final fall of antichristianism, and more before the consummation of all things.

And, second, as I would not have you to suffer your hope to carry you too far, so neither your fear. For as the warm imagination of some men has represented to them the fall of Antichrist, and the day of judgment so near, that these must happen in their times; so the melancholy and fear of others has so far wrought upon them, that they have fancied the great slaughter of the witnesses is yet to come. And, of both these sorts of men this observation will be found generally to be true; that those over whose reason, fancy, and imagination has the ascendant, whether it be an airy or sprightly, or a dull and melancholy one, have still limited great events to their own time, and most commonly to a very few years. But I am much mistaken if I have not proved, that the universal slaughter of the witnesses is already past; though, at the same time, I do readily grant that there is just ground to fear that we are near some very trying judgments, of some years continuance. But I have said enough of this above, and therefore shall add no more here.

But, third, seeing I have touched but slightly upon the millennium, or the thousand years reign of the saints on earth; I shall desire you to think a little further on this, as the greatest event that is to happen before the end of the world.

I dare not indeed expatiate upon this vast subject, only I shall suggest a few things concerning it. The first is, that this is to begin immediately after the total and final destruction, of Rome papal, in or about the year 2000; and, that, therefore, Christ himself will have the honour of destroying

destroying that formidable enemy, by a new and remarkable appearance of himself, as I said above. But, second, we must not imagine that this appearance of Christ will be a personal one, no more than his appearance in the destruction of the Jews by Vespasian, and Titus was such: Acts 3. 21. "For the heavens must retain him, until the great and last day of the consummation or restitution of all things." Third, Yet we must have a care of confounding this millenary peaceful state of the church, with the day of judgment; seeing nothing is more plainly distinguished, than these are in the 20th chapter of the revelation; where it is told us, "That after the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be again let loose, and men shall apostatize almost universally from Christ," and make war against the saints; and that after the destruction of those enemies, the day of judgment shall commence. And, therefore, fourth, we are not to imagine that the millenary reign of the saints shall be free from all mixture of hypocrisy and wicked men, or from sin and trouble; seeing the sudden and general apostacy that follows that period is a demonstration, that all were not Israel that feigned themselves to be of it, and wanted therefore only an opportunity to shake off the churches yoke. Nay, the expiration of that period shews, that long peace and prosperity must have corrupted the church itself; else it cannot be conceived to be consistent with the equity and goodness of God to suffer her enemies to go so near to the total extirpation of his own professing people.

These things I have hinted thus, because I have no time or room to insist upon them as the subject does require. But I do the more readily pass them now, because ^a a late learned

^a Dr Whitby's Treatise of the Millenium, added to his Paraphrase and Comment on the Epistles.

learned author has materially considered them, at least the three last of them; wherein he has very much confirmed my apocalyptical thoughts, which several years ago I had entertained upon this head.

And the same ^a author has prevented my inquiry concerning the call of the Jews, and their national conversion to christianity: For, as I took notice before, I could never fall in with the strained interpretation of Rev. 16. v. 12. as if by the kings of the east the Jews were to be understood, and that consequently their full conversion was to be under the sixth vial. Therefore after various thoughts upon this head, being satisfied that the Jews were to be converted, and that this great event could not be wholly left out in the Revelation, I did at last conclude that this must not be (whatever particular conversions of some part of them might happen) until the final destruction of the popish party; whose idolatry, villanies, lies and legends, and bloody temper, is the chief thing that prejudices them against Christianity. So that I did at length conclude, that the resurrection or revival of the ancient Jewish church, is understood by the resurrection of the martyrs, chap. 20. v. 4. who being thus added to the true reformed Christian church, and making up one body together with those gentile believers, in the fulness or ripened state of the gentile church, shall be to them as life from the dead; Rom. 11. 15, 25.

One notion only I crave leave to add to those of the above-cited author on these heads, viz. that I look upon the millenary state to be the most eminent and illustrious time of the Christocracy, (I hope none will reject the word, though it be new, seeing it is so expressive of the thing), wherein Christ will revive, but in a more spiritual and excellent

^a The same author, *ibid.* and on the 11th of the Romans, and in the appendix to the same.

cellent way, the antient theocracy of the Jews. For as under Moses, the judges and kings of Judah, God acted as king of the Jews, (or Christ rather in a more peculiar and immediate sense, as I may perhaps have an occasion afterwards to prove to the world), so I do expect, that after God has delivered his Christian church from spiritual Egypt, and destroyed his enemies in the Red Sea of their own blood; he will once more exert his power and authority, and our blessed Redeemer will reign as king of his people, not indeed in such a pompous way as among the Jews of old, (for John saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 22.), but in a way adapted to the New-Testament dispensation, and more immediately preparative unto, and typical of the state of glory in heaven, after the day of Judgment is over.

And now that I am upon this great prophetic event, I cannot forbear to give you a new conjecture upon the last numbers of Daniel. For his 70 weeks of years, chap. 9. 24. are already remarkably elapsed in the incarnation and death of our Redeemer. And the number of 2000 days, chap. 8. are plainly to be interpreted of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes his profanation of the sanctuary: For as it is restricted to that short period, as is plain to any that will attentively consider the words themselves, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. especially if compared with ver. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26. so the spirit of God, by designing this period by the title of *εβdomαδες*, or a period of evenings-mornings, i. e. natural days, does plainly assure us that we are not to interpret these days prophetically for years, as we are allowed to do the 70 weeks and other numbers. To return therefore to the last numbers of Daniel; there are two distinct periods of time, as I take them to be, though all other interpreters go another way, to be found in his 12th chapter. The 1st is of a time, times and a half, or three

three years and a half, ver. 7. i. e. 1290 prophetic days, or years, as Daniel himself has it explained to him, ver.

11. This therefore is the same period of time that John borrows from Daniel, and accommodates to the duration of Rome papal; excepting that there is the difference of 30 days, or years; only that *Æra* of this period in Daniel is vastly different from that of John: For as to the latter, we have seen it already; but as to the former, Daniel fixes it at the scattering of the holy people, or the Jewish nation, ver. 7. and at "the taking away the daily sacrifice, and the setting up of the abomination that maketh desolate," v.

11. Now our Saviour, who was certainly the best expounder of his own word, explains this abomination that maketh desolate, and which was to pollute and ruin the sanctuary, to be nothing else but the idolatrous and desolating Roman army; as we see by comparing Mat. 24. 15. with Luke 21. 20, 21. The *Epocha* therefore of the time, times and a half in Daniel, or his 1290 years, must be the year 70 from the birth of our Saviour, when Jerusalem was taken, if we should consider the beginning of the setting up the abomination that maketh desolate. But seeing the *Æra* of this number is not the beginning of the conquest of the Jews, but the compleat scattering of that nation, or the accomplishing the scattering of the power of the holy people, as the words are ver. 7. and the full "setting up of the abomination that making desolate," ver. 11. which was not done till Hadrian's time; who fully conquered the Jews, and built a city near the ruins of Jerusalem, which he called *Ælia*; building at the same time a temple to Jupiter on the ground where the temple had stood, and engraving over the gate of this new city the figure of a swine, in derision of the Jews. Now this work was finished in or about the year 135. From whence the period of 1290 years, leads us down to A. C. 1425. which in prophetic reckoning is

the year 1407. About which time the papal power was at its utmost elevation ; for after this time the Hussites, Albigenfes, Wicklifites, Waldenfes, Picards, &c. began to fall before the Romanists, until they were, in a manner, totally extirpated before another century had well nigh run out. Now this dismal period expires about this time ; and then there follows the second period of 1335 days or years, ver. 12. which being calculated from the year 1407, terminates An. Dom. 2742 i. e. 2722 of prophetical reckoning ; which therefore includes the begun downfal of the papacy under the seven vials ; and the final accomplishment thereof afterwards, together with the greatest part of the millennium, and consequently the great conversion of the Jewish nation during that period. And perhaps the begun apostacy of Jewish and gentile Christians, which is to issue in an universal war against the saints, upon the expiration of the millennium, may begin about that year 2722.

And now that I have come again upon prophetical numbers, I shall venture to digress a little more still, in giving you some further illustration of these two great periods, from the 14th chapter of the Revelations. Of which take these few hints at this time. In the first place then, ye have a description of Christ's followers adhering to him, during the reign and rage of Antichrist, from v. 1. to v. 5. inclusive, which must therefore reach down to anno 606, or 758 rather, to anno 1517. After which we have the begun revival of the church of Christ represented in the second place, by the testimonies of the three angels succeeding one another. The first angel has a commission to preach the gospel purely to all nations, v. 6, 7. which must therefore begin with the preaching of Zunglius and Luther, and does include, I humbly suppose, the periods of the four first vials. The second angel follows, v. 8. and proclaims the fall of Babylon, or the Papacy, and must there-

therefore be synchronical with the fifth vial being panded out upon the seat of the beast. The third angel gives men warning that they should not join with the beast, and denounceth severe judgments against them that shall be found to do so, v. 10, &c.; which therefore relates to the last part of the time of the sixth vial, when the unclean spirits go forth to insinuate into the nations, in order to engage them to make war upon the saints, ch. xvi. v. 13, 14, 15, 16. Now, after all these things, we have in the third place a typical or emblematical account of the deliverance of the church, and of the destruction of the bloody, persecuting, Antichristian party. Therefore we have first the emblem of an harvest, which seems immediately to relate to Christ's gathering his church into an happy state, v. 14, 15, 16. And then, second, we have the representation of the final destruction of the popish party under the emblem of a vintage, wherein the bloody clusters of the several popish fraternities and communities are to be bruised and squeezed to death in the wine-press of God's wrath, verse 17—20. But I have spoken already to this great period of time above which issues in the blessed millennium, and therefore I shall say no more to it at this time.

Only there is one thing that falls in my way here which ought not to be passed over in silence, and that is, to what period we are to refer the happy state of the New Jerusalem, ch. xxi. and of the blessed river and tree of life, ch. xxii. for I find interpreters at a mighty loss this way, whether these relate to the millennium or heaven itself after the day of judgment is past. And, indeed, there are some things that seem inconsistent with either of these states; for what is said of the 'nations flocking in to this new state, and walking in the light of it, and of the kings of the earth that they shall bring in their glory and honour to the church,' ch. xxi, xxiv, xxv, xxvi. seems not to agree

with the notion the scripture gives us of the state of the glorified in the higher heaven after the resurrection; but does exactly suit with the peaceful reign of the saints, when Jerusalem or the Church shall be exalted above the nations, who shall all run in to her. And yet upon the other hand there are things also that seem to be too great even for the blessed millennium, as we have given the notion of it above. Such is the account of the perfection of this state that it will be exempted from all death, sorrow, crying, and pain, ch. xxi. 4. And yet, as the former expressions may be adapted to the state of the church triumphant in heaven, in a spiritual sense, so these last expressions may be made to suit also with the state of the church on earth during the millennium, in a comparative sense, *i. e.* if considered with respect to the preceding afflicted condition of Christians.

Therefore, seeing this last glorious scene of affairs may be interpreted in relation either to the one or other of these periods, I conclude that we ought to interpret it of both, viz. of the millennium in a first sense, and of the future glory of the church in heaven in a second and complete sense. For as I observed above that the sacred prophecies, particularly that in the 24th chapter of Matthew, and 2d chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians, are to be interpreted both in a first and second, or ultimate sense; so I do believe we must of necessity understand the account of the new heavens and new earth, and of the heavenly Jerusalem in this book. And if this be once supposed, then it will be easy to adjust the seemingly different figures used by the Holy Spirit in this place; seeing the whole is so contrived that it may correspond both with the millenary state and the future state of glory, viz. to the first as an emblem and type of the latter. So that as the destruction of the Jewish nation and church is given in such w

Mat. xxiv. as to become this way an emblem of the final destruction of the world, so likewise is the Millennium so painted and described, Rev. xxi. as to be designedly given as a type of the state of the church triumphant in heaven after the day of judgment is over.

A fourth observation from what I said before is this, that our reformers did not rashly, but upon just grounds, desert the church of Rome as Antichristian and Apostatical.

For, not to insist upon prophetical indications of the Roman church being indeed the great Antichrist, there are four things that lay a just foundation for all honest men's leaving that interest, viz. 1. Gross Errors, such as Purgatory, Human Merits, and Works of Supererogation, Indulgences, Transubstantiation, &c. 2. Horrid Idolatry, in worshipping angels, saints, and canonized persons, together with images, statues, crucifixes, and a consecrated wafer. 3. The pretended Infallibility of the Roman See, in imposing upon men's consciences what they please, and debarring us from reading the scriptures ourselves, or making use of our own reason in the matters of religion. And, 4. The dreadful Tyranny of that Party, seen and felt both in their inhuman cruelties, persecutions, massacres, and diabolical barbarities used against all those that differ from them. For the proof of all which things let Chamierus be consulted, together with *Heydegerus de Babylone magna*, *Turretinus de necessaria Secessione ab Ecclesia Romana*, and beside innumerable others, Stillingfleet's late pieces against the Romanists; for my time allows me not now to enlarge upon any of these heads.

Only, that I may not leave you without some specimen of Popery, I shall copy out in English the twelve articles of the Romish faith, additional to the twelve Christian ones, which are contained in the apostles creed, as to the

form and substance of them. These twelve additional articles are contained in the famous bull of Pope Pius IV. dated at Rome in the year 1564, in the ides of November, and the fifth year of his pontificate, which is to be found at the end of the printed canons and decrees of the council of Trent; where, after an enumeration of the primitive articles, beginning with "credo in unum Deum, &c." "I believe in one God, &c." he proceeds to charge all men that would be saved, to own and swear unto the following articles also; anathematizing all that do not so. These begin thus:

Apostolicas et Ecclesiasticas Traditiones, &c.

Which take in English thus:

I. I do also (i. e. together with the articles of the apostles creed) most firmly admit and embrace the apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions, and all other observations and constitutions of the same (i. e. the Roman) church.

II. I do admit the sacred scriptures in the same sense that holy mother church doth; whose business it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of them; which I will receive and interpret according to the unanimous consent of the fathers.

III. I do profess and believe, that there are seven sacraments of the new law, truly and properly so called, instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, and necessary to the salvation of mankind, though not all of them to every person. These are baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and marriage, which do all of them confer grace. And I do believe that of these, baptism, confirmation, and orders, may not be repeated without sacrilege. I do also receive and admit the received and approved

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ites of the Catholic (i. e. Roman) church, in her solemn administration of the above-said sacraments.

IV. I do receive all and every thing that hath been defined and declared by the holy council of Trent, concerning original sin and justification.

V. I do profess, that in the mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and the dead : And that in the most holy sacrament of the eucharist, there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and that there is a conversion made of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood ; which conversion, the Catholic church calls Transubstantiation.

VI. I confess that under one kind only, whole and entire Christ, and a true sacrament, is taken and received.

VII. I do firmly believe that there is a purgatory, and that the souls kept prisoner there, do receive help by the suffrages of the faithful.

VIII. I do likewise believe, that the saints reigning with Christ, are to be worshipped and prayed unto, and that they do offer prayers unto God for us, and that their relicts are to be had in veneration.

IX. I do most firmly assert, that the images of Christ, of the blessed virgin, the mother of God, and of other saints, ought to be had and retained, and that due honour and veneration ought to be given to them.

X. I do affirm that the power of indulgences was left by Christ in the church, and that the use of them is very beneficial to Christian people.

XI. I do acknowledge the holy Catholic and apostolic Roman Church, to be the mother and mistress of all churches : And I do promise and swear true obedience to the

the bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ.

XII. I do undoubtedly receive and profess all other things which have been delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred canons and oecumenical councils, and especially by the holy synod of Trent; and all things contrary thereunto, and all heresies condemned, rejected, and anathematized by the church, I do likewise condemn, reject, and anathematize.

Lo! here, my friends, you have a fair prospect of popery, without any misrepresentation, or so much as comment: For these are the words of the creed itself, which all papists are obliged to believe and profess, in order to salvation; and which all those who enter into religious orders do solemnly swear unto. And therefore it is plain, that these things are not looked upon by the Church of Rome, as disputable opinions, but as necessary articles of faith: And therefore let the author of the case of the Regale and Pontificate, see how he can make good the last concluding words of his book, which are these: "*Concords Romanæ & Reformatæ Ecclesiæ Fides, &c. i. e. the faith of the Roman and reformed church doth agree, or is the same, &c.*" For, if these things be so slight and trivial to him, that he can, as the popish Gallican church doth, swallow and digest all, excepting the eleventh article: he must pardon others, if they continue in the faith of the reformed church, as that which is opposite to the Roman creed, in so many momentous particulars.

Nay, let me add one thing further here as a necessary confectary or inference, from what I have said in relation to this consideration we are still upon; "*That, as our reformers did justly separate from the Romish Church: So we have just ground also to continue separated from that antichristian party.*"

Let

Let others, under pretence of a dread of what they call schism, run back into antichristian errors and heresies. Let them, if they are so disposed, forsake pure christianity, that they may promote the priests power, and adorn their altars with gold and jewels. And let them, in order to enslave mens consciences and bodies both, found a retreat to Babylon again. We, I hope, know our duty better, than to run the risk of damning our souls, by becoming runnegados to that bloody and wicked party, against whose abominations so many thousands of our ancestors witnessed, under racks and torments, and at the stake in Smithfield and elsewhere. They believed, that what they did and suffered was in obedience to the call of God, saying, "Come out from the apostate Romish Church, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven and God hath remembered her iniquities. And God forbid, that any temptation should bring any of us back again to that sink of all impurities and errors, after we have enjoyed the sunshine of the gospel, in its purity and power, so long. Therefore seeing we know what interest we are to keep to, let us be faithful to it, by doing all we can for its security, establishment and honour. And if God call us to suffer for it, let us act as the former heroes of the reformation have done before us, that Christ may be glorified, and the church edified by us, whether it be by doing or suffering, by life, or by death.

The fifth and last observation, that I shall propose to your thoughts, as the conclusion of all I have said is this; "That though we are not to live to see the great and final destruction of the papacy, the blessed millennium, or Christ's last coming to judge the world; yet seeing death is the equivalent of all these to us, if we be so happy as to get into paradise; we ought, therefore, accordingly to spend
and

and improve our time, that we may partake of the future glory when we go hence."

I say, "death is the equivalent of all these things to us, if we be so happy as to get into paradise: For then we shall get the conquest over all antichristian enemies, and be with Christ in a better state than any earthly millenium can be supposed to be, waiting until he come to judge the world, and till we appear also with him in glory, having reassumed our then glorious bodies.

Improve your time therefore, and all the opportunities and advantages of it, with your utmost diligence and seriousness, as remembering that ye are dying and accountable creatures, and that your time is given you for this very end, that you may prepare for a better world.

And now, that we see the beginning, not only of a new year, but of a new age, I must give a further vent to my zeal and concern for your souls good, upon this great and practical head, "viz. The improvement of time, with respect to the upper world;" that when I am gone, I may, by what I have said, and am about to say, continue to speak still to those that shall survive me, and even, (if this discourse last so long), to succeeding generations also. And I suppose ye will the more readily bear with me in this, when ye remember with what unanimity and importunity ye desired me to print a sermon on this head, which I preached on new-year's day, 1699. from Psal. 90. v. 12. for, seeing I was prevented in yielding to your desire then, I shall lay hold on this opportunity to make amends, in some measure at least, for that seeming neglect, by presenting you with some useful hints on this subject.

And here, as I begin to speak upon this head, the story of Xerxes comes to my remembrance, who, when he saw his vast army of a thousand thousand men march by, (with whom he expected to have swallowed up the poor Grecians).

is reported to have wept, upon this thought, that before a hundred years should run out, none of all that multitude would be alive: little imagining, that before the end of that very year, he was to see the destruction of almost all of them, and draw his last breath himself also. For, methinks it is a serious and weighty thing, to think that before the end of this century, all those that now make a figure in the world, will have finished their course, and be gathered in to heaven or hell; new actors coming upon the stage, in their stead. And yet, while I lengthen out my meditation to the end of a century, I find just reason to contract my thoughts, and suppose I see both you and all others, that croud our streets and places of worship, or fill remoter islands and continents, gradually dropping into an eternity, some this year, some the next, and so on.

But, to proceed to the consideration of the subject in hand; I suppose I need not tell you what we are to understand by the improvement of time: Seeing this is too plain to need any explication in a general sense. And neither can it be dark to Christians, in a spiritual sense. For it can denote nothing else, but "such a rational and religious regulation of our time and disposal of our talents and opportunities, especially as we live under the advantages and means of the gospel, that we may ever be occupied in doing and getting good, so as to find favour in the sight of God, and attain afterwards to the happy enjoyment of him. For seeing, as the apostle says, now is our accepted time and day of salvation, we ought to take heed to ourselves that we receive not the grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. 6. 1, 2." We ought to reckon therefore that this space of our life is given us, that we may be taken up in promoting the honour of God and our own and other mens good, as being, in all these respects, in a state of trial. Let us therefore improve our time, by labouring to gain our own ascent

sent and consent fully to the terms of the gospel; by studying the word of God more and more; by a close and impartial trial of our selves; by frequent and fervent prayer; and by an universal and constant obedience to all God's laws and institutions. And let us argue ourselves into this as our duty, by considering how dearly our Lörd Jesus has purchased our duty of grace and opportunity of salvation; how many have been damned and lost for ever, by their not improving this talent of time; how dreadful the condemnation of such will be, who choose darknes rather than light; how unreasonable it is, to be so careful of the body and so regardless of the soul; how strange it is, that we should not do that for our eternal advantage, which worldlings do for a little temporal gain; and lastly, how uncertain we are of the continuance of our time and season of grace.

And seeing, in order to improve time aright, we ought to lay hold of all the special seasons and peculiar opportunities, which God puts into our hand for this end: These will deserve to be particularly considered by us. But since it is the work of prudence, that every man know, and observe his own circumstances and providential occurrences, in order to a right improvement of them accordingly; all that I can do here, is to hint at some generals this way. Therefore 1. let me advise you to make a right improvement of the circumstances of your outward lot in the world. Are you in a state of prosperity? Then be thankful to your gracious benefactor. Are ye honoured? Improve this, that God may be honoured through you. Are ye in any place of power and authority? Lay yourselves out to advance the kingdom of God among men. Are ye rich? Remember what Solomon says, "that wisdom is good with an inheritance;" Eccles. 7. 11. and therefore serve God with what he gives you. But if ye be in adversity, despond

not: But remember, that as prosperity gives men great advantages for doing good, adversity affords more seasons usually for getting good. For in the day of adversity we are more ready to think and consider, than in the time of prosperity, as Solomon says; Eccles. 7. 14; for then is the time and season to consider the vanity and uncertainty of the world, to know ourselves better and God more, and to prepare more readily and thoroughly for another world. 2. Improve your circumstances, in relation to company or retirement. If ye be hurried with company, labour to gain that by them which may in some measure make up your loss of time. If ye can get no good, from them, then study if possible to do them good, by insinuating what may tend to their advantage: And then ye can have no reason to reckon your time lost. But, if ye enjoy the company of good and wise men, it is not to be believed what profit and advantage may be got by mutual discourses to edification, where men are communicative, and can bear with different apprehensions about things, without running into heats and quarrelings. But, if we are shut out from company, we may justly look upon solitude and retirement, as a happy opportunity of advantage and profit, if we do but know how to improve the same, by filling up such seasons with study, meditation and prayer. 3. Improve the means and opportunities of grace and salvation. For the end of all that Christ has suffered and done for us, "is to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself a people zealous of good works; Tit. 2. 14". Therefore let us so hear the word preached, and so join with the prayers of the Church, and so partake of the ordinances of Christ, particularly that of the Lord's Supper; "that we may be built up a spiritual house, as lively stones concurring to the raising up of such an edifice; and that we may become also a holy priesthood, to offer

up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable by Jesus Christ to God;^a 1 Pat. 2. 5. And 4. if at any time, or upon any occasion, ye find the spirit of God to move your thoughts and affections more sensibly than usually, as the angel moved the waters of the pool, of old: Oh! My friends neglect not such a rare gale and favourable opportunity, but improve this happy season and strike the iron when hot and malleable, for, how dreadful must it be to quench the holy spirit, and stifle the convictions, motions, and influences thereof, especially such as are sensible and peculiar!

But seeing, to begin aright is one great mean to carry on any thing successfully, we ought to set about the improving of our time as early as we can, without any delay or procrastination in a matter of this weight and moment. For it is only our present time that we can reckon ours. For as our yesterdays are irrecoverable, so our to-morrows are but may be's and uncertainties. Therefore we^a are always called to hear God's voice, to day, if we will do it at all. And therefore let us "not delay, but make haste to keep God's righteous and holy commandments."

Now, if we would improve our time and life to advantage this way, let us be sure not to neglect the morning of time. And here then, let me put you in mind of four mornings of time. The first is the morning of your life, i. e. the time of your youth, health and strength. Such of you, as have lost this season, in whole or in part, pray double your diligence in the improvement of what remains of your time, But such of you as are young, be advised to remember your creator in the days of your youth, and act so as ye may afterwards look back upon your past days with satisfaction and pleasure, Eccles. 12. 1. Second, the morning

^a See Heb. 4. 7. and C. 3. 7, 13, 15. 2 Cor. 6. 2. Luke 19. 48. Ma. 55. 6. Job 22. 21. Mat. 5. 25. Psal. 119. 60.

morning of every day is a time to be peculiarly improved for God and your own good; for the doing so has a mighty influence upon us as to the right spending of the rest of the day. It is a season, that is not only *amica musis*, a friend to study, as the old saying is, but that is favourable also *orationi et devotioni*, to prayer and devotion; for, while our minds are fresh and undisturbed with the hurries of company and business, it is certainly the fittest time for duty as well as study. And therefore the ^a saints of old were careful not to neglect this season. Third, improve the morning of every week carefully, viz. the Lords day. For, as we discharge our duty then, we may expect God's blessing through the week more or less. But, if we refuse to give God what is his due on his own day, we must not think it strange, if God withdraw from us on those days that he has allowed us to serve ourselves upon. And hence it is no wonder, if we find that true, which many have confessed with sorrow at the hour of death, that the profanation of the Lord's day has been the inlet to all their after sins and miseries both. And fourth, perhaps it may not be unprofitable for us, to set apart the morning of every year, to review what we have done and what has happened to us the year past, and to beg God's blessing through the year following. It has been the practice of some holy persons to do this; some reckoning the year, as it is usual with us in our computations, from the 1st day of January; and others reckoning it from the day of their birth, or baptism, or conversion: In all which every one may take which way pleaseth him best. And now, that we enter upon the morning or beginning of a new century, let me beseech you to begin this work now, if ye have neglected it during the years of the last age, which ye have run through, whether these have been more or fewer.

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^a See Psal. 5. 3. and 92. 2. Job. 1. 5. Mat. 1. 35. and Acts 5. 21.

Having thus given you an account of time, and the opportunities and seasons of it to be improved, I shall proceed, "to recommend this duty from three considerations; and then to direct you how to do it, by proposing three rules to be observed this way.

In the first place, therefore, let me earnestly recommend this duty to you from three weighty considerations.

The first consideration is this, that "it is the duty and wisdom of every one of us, to be duly and deeply impressed with the sense of the worth and value of time."

I might take occasion here to shew you, from innumerable examples, that the best and wisest men in all ages, both Christians and heathens, have been under the deepest and most constant impressions of the value of time. But, as this would be too long for this place, so it is needless to insist upon it; seeing I believe ye can as little form an idea of a wise or good man, that does not value and improve time, as as I can.

Therefore I suppose there is no need to prove to you the worth and preciousness of time. To you, I say, who know the uncertainty of it, and yet how much depends upon the improvement and loss of it. But, if any of you need any awakening this way, consider how valuable time will appear to a convinced sinner when he lies upon a death-bed, who sees himself dropping into another world, and yet apprehends that his peace is not made with God. O, cries the poor wretch, that I had spent less of my time on the world and my lusts, and more of it in minding the good of my soul! O that I had those hours and days back again that I spent in taverns and bad company! O for a year, or a month, or a week at least of health and strength, to make my peace with God! And pray, my friends, were ye never sick, and under some such thoughts then? Were ye not sensible then of mispent time? Or did ye never pro-

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life amendment and reformation, if God should recover you? Where is now the performance of your vows? O, if there be any that forget God, and neglect to do as they have promised and resolved, let them consider their duty and interest in time, lest God tear them in pieces when there is none to deliver them. Alas, my friends, what would those poor wretches give for one day, nay for one hour, who are now in the infernal prison? What would they give for one offer of a Saviour, who are now lamenting their slighting of the gospel, and their mispending their time and opportunities of salvation? Therefore do ye learn to value time more, and improve it better, before it be too late to retrieve lost opportunities. And this leads me to another consideration. Therefore,

The second consideration is, "that it is our wisdom, not only to be impressed with the sense of the worth and value of time, but to be duly and deeply affected and influenced this way, so as to set about the improvement of it, as our greatest and most concerning duty and interest."

For it is not speculation but practice that we are to mind here: And therefore, if our apprehensions of the worth of time do not influence us to improve it, they will only tend to our greater condemnation. Therefore, that what I have said may so effect you, as to incite you to your duty this way; I shall not grudge a little pains in writing further on this head, in hope that ye will not be weary in reading what is written. Take it not amiss therefore, if I address you with some seriousness and warmth of affection, and, through you, all others that may cast their eyes upon these sheets.

My dear friends, some of you have lived twenty, some thirty, some forty, some fifty, some sixty, or more years in the world. Now I beseech you to consider what ye have been doing all this time. Have your performances borne

any proportion to the mercies ye have received from God? Have ye been faithful to improve your talents for your God and Saviour? Have your convictions brought forth a saving conversion? Have your resolutions and promises been all performed? Has it been a matter of conscience to you, to serve God with the best of your time, the greatest vigour of your thoughts, the utmost energy of love and delight, and in a word with all your heart and strength?

If ye have been deficient this way, then pray, consider, not only how impossible it is to bring back any part of the time that is past, but how little, or at least how uncertain the time is, that remains to be lived over. And if any be secure this way, because they are young, or strong and healthful, let them remember how often the old carry the young to the grave, and the weak and sickly see robust and vigorous persons drop off before them. And what is our life at longest? Does not the scripture labour, as it were, under a want of metaphors, to describe its vanity, when it compares it to a handbreadth, a span, a vapour, the grass that is soon mowed down, the flower that quickly fades, the shadow that declines, and the tale that is told? How poor a thing then is it, to be able no otherwise to number our days and years, than by our being born at such a time, and having lived to such another time? There is therefore no more unreasonable desire in the world than to live long, where there is no concern to live well: For this is only to wish to have more time to mispend, to sin longer than others, and to be more miserable in the other world. Besides, that it is impossible, as the course of things is now, to live long in a proper sense: For, as the following distich expresses it,

Vivere quisque diu quærit; bene vivere nemo:

At bene quisque potest; vivere nemo diu.

that

That is,
To live long, all desire ; to live well, none :
Yet all may live well, but none can live long.

For is it not for this very end that time is given us, that it may be improved and lived well, in order to our being fitted and prepared for the happy state of a glorious Immortality ? Surely God did never make so glorious a creature as man, endued with an immortal soul, merely to live the life of the beast, to eat, and drink, and sleep, or to enjoy his sensitive lusts and pleasures.

Think then, my Friends, that according as ye improve or misimprove time, ye are to be happy or miserable for an Eternity. For we are now in a state of trial, and upon our behaviour, in order to be rewarded or punished afterwards, as we shall be found to have acted, when we come to be judged : Therefore we may rejoice now and take our pleasure as we please ; Eccl. 11. 9. Psal. 2. 11. But we have reason to rejoice with trembling, when we remember that we are to be called before God, and judged for all we do now ; 1 Pet. 4. 2. 5. “ For they that live in the flesh, according to their lusts, must give an account to him, that is to be the judge of the quick and the dead.” And then every one of them will hear that dreadful word, “ Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth ;” Mat. 25, 26, 30.

Consider therefore, that it is impossible to recal any moment of time that is lost in a proper and physical sense : And that thus it is a foolish and ridiculous wish ; O mihi prateritos referat si Jupiter annos ! O if God would give me back the years that are past ! But yet in a moral sense we may be said to bring back past time, when by doubling our diligence we do in some sort retrieve the misimprovement

ment of former days. But then it must be remembered, that this must be done now or never; for if our time comes to an end here, there is no returning to a state of trial again, such as we now enjoy: "If a man die, shall he live again?" No, alas, says Job, "For as the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth to the grave shall come up no more;" (*i. e.* to live on earth again, as the following words explain the meaning.) "He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." Therefore let us all say with him, (and improve the thought), "when a few years are come, then shall I go the way whence I shall not return."

Now, besides all these things, it may be of great use to enforce this consideration, to take a view of the complexion and genius of our age, or the time wherein we live. For, if the apostle Paul, when he exhorts his contemporary Christians to redeem the time, gives this as the reason of his advice, "because the days are evil:" I am sure we have much more reason to call the days wherein we live by this name. For the sense of the apostle, when he calls the days wherein he lived evil days, is no doubt this chiefly, if not only, that they were afflictive and perilous times: For times of trouble are* called evil times, or evil days, frequently in scripture. But we may justly take this in a larger sense, in reference to our times; for an age of time may be denominated evil, either with respect to the abounding of errors, profaneness or calamities. And upon all these accounts these days of ours may be justly said to be evil. For, as to errors, how many and how gross are these? How many deny the Lord that bought them? How many oppose his divinity and satisfaction both? Yea, how many revile him as an impostor, and ridicule all revealed religion? Nay, how many dare blaspheme God, and deny his being, and even the first principles of natural religion? And

* See Gen. 47. 9. Ps. 77. 19. Amos 5. 13, 18.

as to profaneness and immorality, where did we ever hear or read of more among Christians? Nay, it may be a question, if ever the heathens were worse than most Christians are now. And again, as for calamities and troubles, we see what other Churches have suffered of late, and do suffer still: And we see in how tottering a condition all the Protestant interest is. And though I believe it will prove a burdensome stone to the enemies of Christ; yet how far God may suffer them to prevail for a time, none of us know: Only I am afraid we are upon the brink of very great troubles. And that (as I have hinted already) as we have been, like Israel of old, peculiarly blest with mercies and privileges, and are as peculiar and singular in sinning; so we are like to be punished in a peculiar and particular manner also. So that if there be (as sure there is) a rule to judge of the connexion of mercies, sins and judgments, we may see our case, as well as that of Israel of old, in the propheticall threatnings of God to that people, when he says, "you only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities;" Amos 3. 2.

Seeing therefore this is the state and complexion of our time, let us take heed to ourselves, that we be not involved in the sins of it, lest we come under the judgments also that seem to hasten on this generation. Consider for this end the apostle's advice; "Beware, says he, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Let us not therefore hear the instruction that causeth us to err from the words of knowledge; but let us beware, lest being led away with the error of the wicked, we fall from our own steadfastness.

But yet, be not so selfish as to mind only your own concerns, but remember that ye are members of a city, of a Church

Church and nation, and that ye are members also of the Catholic Church of Christ that is every where dispersed. And therefore act as under all these ties and relations. And if ye can do no more, intercede at least with God that he may be gracious: Stand in the gap, that ye may, if possible, avert his displeasure. Act therefore as "serious, faithful, and importunate remembrancers of the Lord, giving him no rest, but crying unto him night and day, until he arise, and until he make his Zion and Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth."

There is yet a third consideration which I would add to the former, in order the more effectually to recommend this duty to you, viz., "The improvement of your time." And this is what is indeed frequently insisted upon, but I am afraid very little lived up to, viz. "That we are in the sight, and under the inspection of an all-seeing God, who is to be our judge at last."

O, my friends, is this a matter only of speculation to you? Dare any of you do that in the sight of God which ye would be ashamed to do in the view of the world? I remember I have heard of an eminently holy man, who, being tempted by a harlot to commit lewdness with her, in a place where she was mistress and had the command, seemed to consent for the present, with this condition only, that she should find out a close retirement, where none could be present and see what they did. Upon which she carried him from chamber to chamber, and from place to place. But he had still something to object against the privacy of every one of them. At length she brought him to a very dark and obscure corner, telling him that none could see what was done there, but God and the Devil. What, said he, is that nothing? You must carry me where neither God nor the Devil can see us, else I will never do what you desire. And I remember also I have heard of another, who

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being tempted in like manner, consented, upon condition of having liberty to chuse the place. Which being granted, he chose the public market-place. When she refused this, saying, she could not for shame do so in the open view of the world: He replied, that he durst far less do this in the sight of God; and asked, how she durst do that in the sight of God, which she was ashamed to do before men?

Even the heathen moralist Seneca adviseth men to act in all things, as if they had both God and the wisest and best of men looking on: "Set Cato, Scipio, or Lælius before you, says he, or some such excellent person, upon whose appearing even the most wicked person would be frightened from doing amiss openly. But he adds in another place; what will it avail you, to hide yourselves and your doings from men, since there is nothing concealed from God? For he looks into our breasts, and is present in our very minds and hearts. And elsewhere; it avails a man nothing, says he, to shut up or stifle conscience, since every thing we do lies open to God's view; and therefore our great wisdom is to act so that we may approve ourselves to him."

How consonant are such expressions to the sacred standard of our holy religion? And what shall we answer to our Master at the great day, if we suffer such persons to exceed and outrun us who are Christians? Let us therefore mind the principle that swayed Joseph, when he said, under a very great temptation, considering his low and obnoxious condition; "shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And let us imitate David, who "set the Lord always before him," and looked upon him as present at his right hand, to the end that he might never be moved, but be encouraged still to trust in him. For we are never to remember, that our secret, as well as public sins, are set in the light of God's countenance; seeing the darkness

ness hides us no more from God, than the meridian light of the sun."

But we must consider likewise, that we have not only a constant witness and inspector of our actions without us, but one within us, even our own conscience; which doth excuse or accuse us, according as we behave and act. And as one says well on this head, *quid prodest non habere conscium, habere conscientiam?* i. e. what avails it to have no witness of our actions, while we have a conscience that keeps an exact register of all we do? Only we must remember, that this is but a secondary witness; for "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."

And now, my friends, I have done with what I had to say to the three considerations, from which I proposed to recommend and inforce this great duty of improving our time. And I leave it to you to consider, whether what I have said be not sufficient this way, through the blessing of God, and your pains and concern to apply to yourselves what has been said.

Therefore, in the second place, I proceed to direct you how ye may attain rightly and successfully to improve your time to the best advantage, as ye are Christians and accountable creatures. And this I shall do, by proposing three rules, which will take in all that is necessary or useful this way; though the first rule is the principal and only direct one, which doth take in the whole of our duty this way; the second and third being only subservient unto this, though exceedingly useful, if not necessary also, in their places.

The first rule is this, that ye take heed, that ye lose not your time, and the opportunities and seasons thereof, by sin and vanity, but that it be always filled up, with the conscientious and diligent discharge of all necessary duties.

This being, as I said already, the principal rule, in or-

der to the regulation of our time ; and being so contrived, as to direct us both negatively and positively, as to what we are to avoid, and what we are to do ; I shall accordingly consider it distinctly in both the parts of it.

The first part of this rule teaches us, “ how time is lost and what we are therefore to avoid, in order to the right improvement of it.” And it is necessary to premise this, before we consider the other part, for we can only then apply ourselves to fill up our time wisely, in the performance of those duties, in the discharge whereof the redemption and improvement of time consists ; when we apprehend what those things are, which are detrimental and hurtful to our souls, both here and hereafter.

Now, in the general, we are to take care to rescue our time out of the hand of those two grand robbers that thief it away from us, *viz.* sin and vanity. For as we are carefully to avoid the mispending of our time, by thinking, doing or speaking what is sinful in itself : So we are to take heed of such things, which though they are not simply sinful in themselves, are yet such trivial matters or by-concerns as become sinful to us, when we spend too much time upon them, or mind them as if they were our most weighty and principal business.

But because those things, that are evil and sinful in themselves, such as blasphemies and lies, immorality and profaneness, ought not to be so much as named among Christians, or have a moments time allowed them, so as to be entertained or thought upon with delight or design, far less brought forth in life and action, we shall therefore pass by these wholly at present ; in order to consider those things that, though lawful in themselves, ought not to be so minded, as to take up all or most of our time. Allow me then, to give you my advice in these things following.

Be not too prodigal of your time, in “ the gratification
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of your senses, and the services of your body. Let the cultivation and adorning of your souls take up more of your time, than the clothing and dressing of your bodies. Be not buried in sleep and sloth too long, while time is so short and uncertain, and ye have so much business to fill it up with. Neither do ye allow yourselves more time than is necessary or convenient, for the feeding and pampering of your bodies. Be not like them therefore, who are so severely reprov'd by God, for living sensually in this world, when they ought to have minded higher things. Of whom this sad character is given; "that they put away far from them the evil day; that they lay upon beds of ivory, and did eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the stall, chanting at the sound of the viol, drinking wine out of bowls, and anointing themselves with the chiefest ointments: But that in the mean time they were altogether unmindful of the state of the Church, and no way grieved for the afflictions of Joseph. Therefore, as the apostle exhorts, let us walk honestly, as in the day (or clear sunshine of the gospel) not in rioting (or in dancings,) and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: for these things, says he, are the making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Spend not too much of your precious time in divertive exercises and recreations. We may indeed use these not only lawfully but profitably, both with respect to the health and strength of the body, and the vigor even of the mind; which being unbended for a while with innocent amusements, will be in better case to return again to close thinking. But we must not make recreation our business, as too many do, who are so intoxicated with the secret witchery of gaming, as to have their minds rendered almost incapable of any close application to serious and important matters.

Spend

Spend not too much of your time in company and discourse, unless business oblige you to do so. The company of atheistical and wicked men, especially if they be witty, and of an engaging temper, carries commonly an infection with it; and their discourse breathes a secret and insinuating poison, that every one has not a strong enough antidote in his nature to resist. And though the company we associate ourselves with be good, yet we are to remember the old saying, *amici sunt fures temporis*, that friends are frequently the thieves that rob us of our own time; the commodity that of all others we are to be most parsimonious of, seeing we can never retrieve its loss. To visit friends, is often a great duty; but it is frequently to the hurt both of the visitors and visited that these are made. For, as much time is commonly lost this way to no purpose: so the discourses that are the entertainment of most companies, are too often mere vanity, if not worse; for it is too customary at such times to give way to foolish talking and jesting, or to censorious reflections upon other persons. There is an innocent freedom indeed, and facetiousness in discourse, which is both allowable and pleasant: But, alas! how soon doth this degenerate, if great care be not taken to keep our minds in a right poize? And if I appear to any to be too rigid in what I say on this head, let it be remembered, that Christ has forewarned us, that we must give an account of every idle word, as well as unwarrantable action, in the day of judgment. As therefore we are to avoid moroseness on the one hand, so we are to take care that we tire not our friends by too frequent or too long visits. There are indeed some such friends in the world, though very rare to be found, who the more they are together, do the more love and profit one another. But as to ordinary friends, the case is quite otherwise: In relation to whom Solomon gives this wise advice; "withdraw thy

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foot from thy neighbours house, lest he be at last weary of thee, and so hate thee:" that is, according to the gloss of some upon the words; make thyself precious, wear not out every man's threshold, by obtruding thyself upon them; neither make thyself vulgar and cheap, as a mean commodity, that is every's man's money.

But remember also, that ye may be guilty of mispending your time in vain and profitable musings, as well as in vain discourse. Idle thoughts are as foolish a mispence of time as idle words: For every sort of thinking and meditating is not judicious no more than holy. And though a man think not upon his lusts, he may think very impetuously, and consequently sinfully.

And this is not only the fault and weakness of Plebeian, but of learned heads, who mispend time frequently as much as any other sort of men, upon their difficiles nugæ, their useless yet painful curiosities and niceties. This was the custom of the learned doctors of old Athens, who spent their days in almost nothing else, but telling or hearing some new notion, scheme, or theory; and then disputing, *pro et contra*, for and against it. But while they were earnest to dispute about *Forma substantialis, universale a parte rei, fuga vacui, apathies, the possibility of motion*, and such like nugæ and whims, they forgot God and solid religion; and were such sceptics, or superstitiously ignorant (for ye may interpret the words either way) that in the midst of their multitude of Gods, they were willing to erect one altar more, with this inscription, ver. 23. *to the unknown God*. It is true indeed, that there are many curiosities of this kind, that a wise man may improve to great advantage. But when they are made our main or only business and study, instead of being parergons, or by-studies, we are certainly far out of the road of true wisdom. What profit has the metaphysician, in abstracting from all particular beings,

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that he may define *Ens* generically, as *unum, verum, bonum*, while he is ignorant of him that is truly such. To how little purpose at length will the mathematician find he has studied, in order to adjust and determine the proportions of points, lines, sides and angles, if he neglect the proportions of piety and virtue? What will it avail the astronomer to see the planets through a tube, if he fall short of the happy world at last that is above all these? Is any man the better for being able to adjust and reconcile the Egyptian, Chaldee, and Grecian Dynasties, by reducing all the different *Æras* of nations to the Julian period, while he neglects to number his own days so, as to apply his heart to true wisdom? And lastly, what advantage has any man, by being able to speak all the languages in the world, while he worships and praises God in none of them?

Nay, I tell you further, that a man may even mispend his time in the service and worship of God, circumstantially considered. For though we worship God, yet what advantage can we reap by it, if we do so ignorantly, or hypocritically, or customarily, and merely for the fashion, or profanely and irreverently, or dully and heartlessly? Nay, we may lose our labour this way also, when by this we thrust out more immediately incumbent and necessary duties; or when we neglect the performance of this, till we be altogether unfit for it, offering thus to the Lord a corrupt thing while we have a male in our flock.

And if thus we may mispend time, how much more are we like to do so, while the cares of the world, and the inordinate desire of what we call its pleasures, profits, and honours, juggle out religion, both from our thoughts and lives? Solomon adviseth us, not to labour to be rich; but he immediately subjoins, "cease from thy own wisdom." Whereby he insinuates, that a man must be mortified to his carnal and worldly ratiocinations, and taught by the

spirit of God to know the true value of things, before he can possibly learn this lesson from him. However he positively determines these two things, "that he that hasteth to be rich, hath an evil eye; and that he that does so, shall not be found to be innocent." Mottos that all men might find it convenient to write on the head of their books of accounts. And if Solomon's words have little effect upon you, consider what a greater than Solomon says of a covetous or anxiously solicitous disposition and practice in the 6th chapter of Matthew, where he represents and condemns it as unchristian and heathenish, and as unreasonable and pernicious. And after all remember these serious and pungent words of his, "what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

And now I hope I have said enough as to the things we ought to avoid, if we would rightly improve our time. But seeing it is not sufficient to know how time is lost, unless we know also what we are to be occupied about, and wherein the best and wisest disposal of our time stands; therefore we must further consider the great and necessary duties with which we ought to fill up the seasons and vacuities of our life.

And therefore I proceed now to the second part of this great and principal direction concerning the improvement of our time, which is this, that we take care to fill it up with the conscientious and diligent discharge of all necessary duties.

And here, though in the general we cannot but know that our time is wholly to be taken up in getting and doing good, yet we must remember that it is only in relation to time that we are to consider our duties in this place. And therefore I am only to consider here those great and necessary duties which are always obligatory upon us, and

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the neglect of which is inseparable from the misimprovement of time. For it cannot be supposed that I should so much as hint all those things that come under the general notion of duty, or consider those things which particular circumstances and emergencies render obligatory to us, or such duties which are called relative, from the stations we are in, and the relations we bear to others.

There are therefore a few things only which I shall recommend to you as altogether useful and necessary, and which none of us can ever plead exemption from.

And, in the first place, let me beseech you to improve your time, by frequent, diligent, and serious reading and studying the holy scriptures; In the first book of which ye will find your minds led up to the first antiquities, which no other book beside can furnish you with any just account of. There we see the origin of man and the world; man's primeval state, when first created; the original of sin, death, and misery; the subversion of the first race of men, by the great deluge, which heathen antiquities speak of only as through a cloud; the first spring and dawning of mercy and hope to lapsed men; the succession of the first and most primitive Church, and the beginning and progress of gentile idolatry, superstition, and wickedness; together with the first original of nations, cities, arts, governments, languages; and in all these the superintending providence of God, in its justice and goodness, wisdom and steadiness: And by this knowledge we bring back, as it were, all past time, and make it our own as to our profit and advantage. In the other books of Moses, we have an account of God's creating a poor oppressed people to be a Church of God's peculiar possession; wherein we see his wonderful appearance for them, by signs and miracles; his strange and unusual way with them in all their journey, in trying, feeding, and preserving them; his giving them laws

laws ecclesiastical, moral and political ; his wrapping up most profound mysteries under ceremonies and customs, and his bringing them into a noble country with power and glory, destroying their enemies before them ; together with innumerable observable occurrences, and theoretical and useful things to be taken notice of therein. The historical part of the old testament, that follows that of the law, as the Jews call it, gives us a relation of most admirable and great revolutions and transactions as ever fell out in the world, wherein we may observe the various, and yet uniform steps of divine providence in governing the world and the Church ; God's trying, and yet rewarding the righteous ; his permitting sin, and yet punishing sinners. In all which occurrences we have the best examples that can be to be imitated by us, and an account of the worst also, that we may avoid such pernicious courses. The book of Job is a mirror, wherein we may learn what afflictions the best men are liable unto, and what reproaches they may unjustly fall under, even by good men like themselves, through mistake and infirmity ; as also, how we ought to behave in the time of calamity ; and what the end of the Lord at length usually is. The psalms are the most excellent model of practical and experimental piety, and the best prayer-book and directory for devotion that ever the world was blessed with. The proverbs of Solomon are the most excellent and refined ethics that were ever published, or ever will be. Ecclesiastes is the noblest picture and demonstration of the world's vanity. And Solomon's song the most spiritual pastoral, the finest allegory, and the divinest poetical description of the love between Christ and devout souls that ever saw the light. The prophetic writings give us the noblest and distinctest idea of God's government of nations, and the righteousness and equity of all his providences and administrations ;

besides

besides innumerable other lessons to be learned from thence.

And, as for the new testament, the first thing that occurs to us, is the most excellent part of the whole bible, I mean, the fourfold history of our blessed saviour. O, let your thoughts dwell long, and strike deep here; for all the historical passages of the gospels, all the wise and sage parables to be found there, all the miracles wrought, all the truths revealed, and all the counsels and exhortations there given, I say, all these are so many rich veins of what is more precious, than the finest gold, and admirable and useful above all thought. The book of the acts of the apostles, gives us a noble and impartial account of the beginning and progress of the gospel, and the first settlement of the Church, wherein we have a naked and clear view of Christianity in its pure and primitive dress; together with some most profitable examples, and useful discourses. The apostolical epistles give us a full and copious account of the religion of the blessed Jesus, both in its principles and practice, its original and design. So that these are sufficient alone, if rightly understood, to enlighten our minds, to influence our affections and designs, and to regulate our lives and conversations. And the book of the revelation, though, dark and enigmatical, represents to us, in an august and lofty manner, the rectorship of our Lord Jesus in governing the world, over-ruling and disposing the designs and actions of men, and making all things at length work together for the illustration of his own glory, and his people's good.

Thus we see something of the special properties of the several parts of the scripture, and what excellent things may be learned from thence. But let us consider all those properties that are common to the whole bible, and every part of it. Let us therefore look upon all the books that compose

compose this sacred volume as divinely inspired, and as designed in all respects, for our profit and edification. Therefore, let us read and study them, not as the word of men, but as they are indeed the word of God; *i. e.* so as to prize and value them according to their worth; to love and delight in them; to praise God for them; to meditate upon them as men, not as children; and to conform our lives wholly to them. And in order to become thus humble, impartial, and obedient scholars of Christ let me put you in mind of one thing, than which nothing is more neglected, and yet nothing more necessary in order to profit truly by the bible, *viz.* That ye have a care of laying down any opinion or scheme of opinions in matters religious, previously to your having impartially examined the sacred scriptures in such matters. For they that do so come not to be taught of God, but to dictate to the almighty, and are not afraid often to withdraw the sacred text, in order to force it to speak, not what it really does, but what they would have it to do, as best suits with their prejudices, passions, and party-designs, that I say not lusts also. Therefore, let me desire you (as I have often done from the pulpit) to make the bible itself, and particularly the new testament, your chief, (and, in a proper sense, only), system, confession of faith, and creed. For whatever excellency there is in any human composures of this kind, we are to own them no farther than we find them to agree and harmonize with the divine oracles.

In the next place, let us improve our time, by frequent, serious, and close meditation on divine and profitable things. Let the character of the blessed man, psalm 1, 2, 3. be ours, by our meditating on the laws and truths of God day and night. For to what purpose do we read the scriptures, and other good books, if we be not at pains to penetrate into the things therein contained? Now it were endless,

and

and in some sense impossible, to name all those things that may be profitably thought upon. But perhaps it may not be amiss to suggest to you the principal heads of sacred theology; by which, as so many avenues, ye may attain mentally to converse with God and truth.

In the first place, then, meditate on God himself, his attributes, works and word, and the blessed persons of the Godhead. Then think on man in his first innocent state, in his lapsed condition, and begun recovery; and on thyself particularly, thy nature, thy faculties, thy state, thy faults, thy end, thy duties, and thy privileges and advantages. Meditate often on Jesus Christ, his person, his properties, his offices, his merits, his sufferings, his conquest, his business and work now in heaven, and his management of the Church on earth, and the world in general. Then think of the holy spirit, his office, work and influences. And let the Church also be considered in its obligations, ordinances, sufferings, progress and victory. And think likewise of the particular state of the saints of God on earth, their temptations, the principles by which they are acted, their conversation, and the promises made them. Hence let your minds be led in to contemplate the great blessings of true religion, such as conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, peace of conscience, joy in the holy ghost, communion with God, the prelibations of heaven, and final perseverance. And then let your thoughts terminate upon what we call the last things. Think, therefore, on death, its certainty; yet the uncertainty of the time of it; the great change it brings upon us; how terrible it will be to be unprepared for it, and the happiness of being ready for so great a change. Then think upon the dissolution of this world, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and this vast pile of our planetary world become one great conflagration. And from thence let your minds contemplate the

the great day of judgment, those grand affizes, where all mankind must be impartially judged, and sentence be pronounced upon them accordingly. And, after all, let your thoughts pass beyond the limits of time, and step into the eternal state. There, go down to the infernal prison for a while, and view the horrors of the place, the frightful aspect of the company, and the intenseness and perpetuity of the torments. Then mount the steep ascent, and soar aloft, upon the wings of contemplation, to the blissful regions of the celestial paradise. There satiate your thoughts with the pleasures and beauties of the place, the felicity and joys of that state and government, the excellency of the company, the glory of the discoveries made there, the noble employment that takes them up, and the eternity and immutability of all these. Think then, upon these few hints, my friends, (where there are almost as many subjects as words), and ye can never want matter for your thoughts to work upon.

And now, seeing all our study and meditation must be so managed that we may receive some real and abiding advantage, let us ever call ourselves to a serious and impartial account as to the spending of our time: For, how can we satisfy ourselves, without conversing with our own souls, in order to know how it is with them? And how can we attain to know ourselves, if we never examine and try how it is with us? If merchants, and men of business are so careful to set down every thing in their journals and books of account, that they may be able exactly to balance what they call their debit and credit, their losses and gains; ought not Christians to mind their eternal concerns with the like exactness and accuracy? How wonderfully does Seneca speak on this head, when he tells us, that, in imitation of one Sextius, whom he highly commends, he had been accustomed to examine himself every night? "When

" at

"at night, says he, the candle is out, and all is still and
"quiet, then do I look back upon and search all the day
"past, by measuring and running over all I have thought,
"said, or done. I hide nothing from myself; I overlook
"and pass by nothing. I say to myself, so and so thou
"hast done unadvisedly; do so no more. And again, I
"ask myself, what evil have I healed? What vice have I
"resisted? What passion have I moderated? What lesson
"have I learned? And what good have I done? And O,
"says he, what a sweet sleep follows, after this recognition
"of a man's self, when one is conscious of his impartiality
"and seriousness, in the review and censure of himself, and
"his own manners!"

And to this purpose we find an excellent direction in the
golden verses, as they are called, of old Pythagoras,

"Before thine eyes to slumber sweet give place,
"Be sure the past day's journal first to trace.
"Survey thy steps and actions all: then say,
"Which good? which bad? how ordered were they?"

O then, my friends, let not it be said of us that we live
in the neglect of this duty, lest heathens rise up in judg-
ment against us and condemn us.

But, since we are not born for ourselves only, let us be
concerned to promote the good of others also. Let us there-
fore improve time, by being useful in our stations to the
Church of God and good men, and to all as far as we can;
for so we are obliged, as we are members of communities,
cities and nations, and as we are inhabitants of the world.
And, in order to be thus useful, let us set before ourselves
the glorious example of Christ, "whose meat and drink it
was to do the will of his heavenly father, and who went
about always doing good." And, therefore, let us be a-

shamed to live as useleſs plants in the world, which do only cumber the ground.

And, in order to perform all theſe things aright, and ſo to improve our time to the beſt advantage, let us be ſure to ſpend as much of our time in prayer as poſſibly we can: For, as it is thus that we attain to moſt immediate and direct communion with God, ſo it is this way that we attain to be ſtrengthened and directed in the performance of all the duties we are obliged to be taken up in. Therefore, let us remember, that it is not without juſt ground that we are commanded to pray always, and to pray without ceaſing. The ſenſe of which expreſſions I take to be this, that, as we are to keep up ſtated times of ſolemn prayer to God, and to have recourſe to him, in a more ſpecial manner, upon extraordinary emergents and occurrences, in order to be peculiarly directed and aſſiſted then from God; ſo we are ever to keep ourſelves, as much as poſſibly we can, in a praying-frame, and for this end to fill up all the vacuities of other affairs and ſtudies with ejaculatory prayers and breathings. But, beſides all theſe things, there is one thing further that I never found any writer take notice of, that I look upon to be the principal deſign of ſuch expreſſions: And this is, “That we be careful to proſecute the deſign of our prayers from one time of our life to another, waiting for the answer of them, and improving the ſame in praiſe, when received.” *Exempli gratia*, if a Chriſtian pray long for a full victory over ſuch or ſuch a temptation or luſt, let him proſecute this deſign in all his prayers until he receive an answer; which, when he has got, let him turn this from the catalogue of his petitions to that of his thankſgivings. And ſo let him act alſo with reſpect to mercies to be received, promiſes to be fulfilled, and miſeries to be averted.

And thus I have at length finiſhed the firſt and principal

pal rule I had to propose to you, with respect to the improvement of time, in both the parts thereof. And now I am to hint to you two more, which are only subservient ones, though at the same time, worthy of your most serious thoughts.

The second rule therefore is this, "That, in order to the right improvement and disposal of time, we do both dedicate ourselves solemnly to God, and as explicitly as we can, in order to spend our lives wholly in his service; and be concerned, in order to this, to keep a secret and exact register or diary of all our own actions, and the providences of God in relation to us."

But, seeing I have hinted something in relation to both the parts of this rule in another discourse, viz. "that concerning the ministerial work," I shall not therefore trouble you with any thing more upon either of the heads.

Only, let me say this one thing further, in relation to the keeping of a diary or private register, that every man must be left to his own discretion as to the manner and method of adjusting those things that occur to him in his life. As, therefore, some may think it best to set things down according to the series of the time they fall out in: So others may look upon the method of heads, or common places, to be the best. And, if any serious person shall think this last way the best, (for as to the first the method cannot be mist), he may perhaps find these heads not unreasonable or useless, viz. that, after a short series of his life, to be further continued, he proceeds in this order:

1. To consider God's providence to him, in adapting and disposing of him for particular ends, agreeably to the faculties of his soul, and constitution of his body, together with his external circumstances, in a relation to both.

2. What his conversation has been, with the time and manner of it.

3. How far, and in what way he has been led into covenant with God, with the renovations of the same.

4. What crosses and troubles he has met with, and how far these have been improved and sanctified.

5. The dangers, spiritual or temporal, he has been delivered from.

6. The sins he is most inclinable unto naturally, and those he has been most guilty of and overcome by.

7. How frequently, in what manner, and upon what occasions, he has been deserted by his God; and, so far as he can conclude, for what ends these have happened to him.

8. What evidences he has had of the wrath and displeasure of God; upon the account of sin.

9. And what intimations he has met with of the love and kindness of his heavenly father.

10. What temptations, inward or outward, he has been most assaulted by, and what he has found to be the best antidote and relief against these.

11. What observations and experiences, he has met with, to confirm him in the belief of the Christian religion, as to the being of God, the divinity of Christ, and the existence of invisible powers.

12. What observable and remarkable things have happened to him, in his business, studies, or converse with men, that may be of use to himself or others, as to life and conversation in the world.

13. Particularly, what has occurred to him in the remarkable turns and changes of his life, in health and sickness.

14. What intimacy, familiarity and communion, God has graciously admitted him into with himself; and what answers and returns of prayer God has granted him.

And, 15. What special and peculiarly distinguishing circumstances

circumstances he has been under, wherein the footsteps of a peculiar conduct have been conspicuous to him.

Under these heads I humbly suppose all things may be regularly disposed, that can be thought necessary to compose a private Christian's register. Though I presume not to dictate to any man, but leave every one to follow his own method.

The third and last rule is this, that we set down some short, rational, and natural directory, according to which we may be enabled and assisted rightly to improve our time.

But, seeing every one is to compose this according to his own circumstances, there is no man that can justly prescribe to another in this matter. Nay, there is none that can set to himself such a directory, as to all particulars, that he can be supposed to be tied up to, at all times; since the providence of God is so various this way, that our circumstances render our condition, and consequently our duty, almost as different as the weather is. And, therefore, a spiritual prudence is that which is to every one the great directory of his life. For, when the providence of God renders our particular rules and methods impracticable, unlawful, or inconvenient; it is both our duty and wisdom to fall in with the present circumstances of things, rather than with our own arbitrary determinations; seeing, then, the state of the question is, whether God's method or ours should be followed?

All therefore that I shall propose to you here, is the consideration of three things, which are easily minded, and may be put in practice every day, whatever our circumstances are.

1. When we awake in the morning, let this be among your first thoughts; "how shall I spend this day to best advantage, for the honour of God, and my own good?" And

when ye have considered what is most proper to promote these ends; then firmly propose to yourselves your business through the day, and fixedly resolve upon acting so: and accordingly proceed and fall to work.

2. In the middle of all your business, or studies, allow yourselves some time of breathing, in order to reflect upon these two things, *viz.* what ye are, and what ye do; putting these frequently to yourselves by way of query, thus: what am I? that is, am I sure I am in favour with God? am I indeed regenerated? am I spiritual in thought, affection, and design? And again, what do I? am I employed as I ought to be? are my ends right? are the means I make use of lawful and proper? are my studies or my business such as I ought now to be occupied about? do I behave in all respects as one that is journeying towards the better country?

3. In the evening, sleep not before ye have examined yourselves as to the actions and occurrences of the past day. But, having spoken already to this duty, I shall only add here, that it will be of great use for you to examine yourselves as to two things, by way of question to yourselves, thus; what has God's providence been to me this day? What have I seen or heard that deserves special observation and improvement? What mercies have I received? What troubles have I met with? What dangers have I escaped? Did God assist me, or desert me in my devotions and business; Have I learned nothing new from his holy word? Did he seem to receive, or shut out my prayers? And again, what has my way been towards God? Have I done nothing to dishonour him, or to discredit my profession? Have I acted so as to approve myself to my God, in thought and design, as well as in word and action? Wherein have I failed in my duty? What have I done for religion? and what for my own good, or the good of others? What have

I done that I ought to beg the pardon of? And what have I to praise God for?

Now, my friends, I hope these three generals are easy both to be remembered and practised. For, as for the particular questions I have suggested, they are only proposed to shew more fully the design of the general ones; and therefore every one may pick and choose, or vary from these, as his own circumstances do require, and as his prudence will direct: I only desire you then to remember the three heads themselves, with relation to the morning, the day, and the evening, as they are comprehended in these three mnemonical words, propose, reflect, and examine.

And thus I have at length come to the end of that which I had to say to you upon this great and practical head of improving time to the best advantage, which I conclude with these few watch-words. Spend not your time so as to be afterwards obliged bitterly to repent of what ye have done: Spend no time on that which ye cannot review and look back upon with comfort: Spend no time so as ye dare not pray for a blessing from God upon what ye do: Spend no time without some respect to God's glory, or your own and others good. And be sure so to spend and improve your time, that your great work may be done before your life end; that, when your few days are lived over, ye may joyfully enter in upon a happy eternity.

Now, having finished all I had to say, by way of improvement of the apocalyptical thoughts I have presented you with, I desire ye may candidly interpret my design, and favourably construe my performance. And one thing I hope ye will remember, that, seeing this discourse is by way of epistle, I have therefore used an epistolary freedom, both in what I have said, and in the way of writing, not tying myself up to so close a method, as in other discourses; though I have not altogether neglected even that: But,

if

if I have failed in any respect, remember further, that I write to those I look upon to be my true, good, and kind friends. Let therefore the name and ties of friendship plead for me, where ye may discern my infirmities, and induce you to pass a favourable sentence upon my attempt to assist you in the way to heaven.

And now, that I write to such dear friends, and have mentioned the ties of friendship, let me beg of you that ye would make it your business to live together as such: For there is nothing Christ has enjoined us more, than mutual love, in so much as he has made it the badge of our Christianity, when he tells us, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." And, therefore, it was one great end of his coming into the world, to introduce a divine and universal friendship among men. For, as the devil promotes his kingdom in the world, by dissensions, emulations, hatred and malice; so our blessed master carries on his by union, gentleness, peaceableness, and universal kindness, love and charity.

But, besides a general friendship, it would be of great use to cultivate a peculiar one with one or more whose disposition is most agreeable to ours. And seeing there is little of this now to be found in this selfish age, let me give you such a description of it as may make you fall in love with it. And, if this appear too florid, remember that as the subject itself is so, it is part of a youthful composure of mine, in a letter to a worthy friend, who had desired my thoughts upon this head many years ago. "True friendship is a divine and spiritual relation of minds, an union of souls, a marriage of hearts, and a harmony of designs and affections: Which being founded on a known agreeableness, and entered into by a mutual hearty consent, groweth up into the purest kindness, and most endearing love; maintaining itself by the openest freedom, the

" warmest

“ warmest sympathy, and the closest secrecy. And such
“ friends are as twins, every way alike ; or like sweet flow-
“ ers, agreeing in beauty, though perhaps differing in co-
“ lour, like the rose and lilly, the primrose and violet twist-
“ ed round one another, and mixing both colours and
“ smells. Or they may be compared to two pleasant rivu-
“ lets flowing from one spring and fountain, though sepa-
“ rated perhaps by some unlucky rising of the ground ;
“ yet meeting again in some kind and flowery mead, which
“ they bless by their chearful and gentle meanders ; and
“ it may be thence separated again at some distance, where
“ they glide along silently, murmuring now and then to
“ one another, and mutually complaining of the rude banks
“ that obstruct their joining ; until at length, having run
“ their full course, and becoming one stream, they pour
“ themselves forth into the great ocean itself, and become
“ one with it also. So that, like the rest of the bitter
“ sweets of this life, friendship has its ups and downs
“ until it flow into heaven, from whence it took its rise ;
“ which is the consummation of all divine friendships, and
“ where all true friends do at length happily meet, never
“ to part.”

And now, my friends, I shall conclude this long epistle
in the words of a* famous doctor and father of the ancient
church : “ Learn, O faithful and religious men, and care-
“ fully apprehend the design of the gospel polity. For
“ which end, study to conquer fleshly lusts, to be humble
“ in heart, pure in mind, and masters of your passions. If
“ ye are called to suffer, act heroically, and do something
“ over and above mere passiveness, for the honour of your
“ Lord. If ye are unjustly treated, evidence that ye are
“ not contentious : If hated, love your enemies ; if perse-
“ cuted, endure it ; and if reviled, answer no man other-
“ wise than by prayer and good wishes. Die to sin, cru-
cify

* Basil Magn.

“ cify your affections for God, and cast all your care upon
“ your Lord and master. That thus ye may at length
“ reach the glorious place, where millions of angels, and
“ the glorious assembly of the first-born are praising God,
“ and where the holy apostles, prophets, patriarchs, mar-
“ tyrs, and all the righteous are. To this blessed society,
“ let us labour and pray to be joined, through Jesus Christ
“ our Lord. To whom be glory for ever.

APOSTSCRIPT.

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A POSTSCRIPT

CONTAINING

A short account of the first principles of the apocalyptic interpretations advanced in the preceding discourse.

AFTER I had finished the foregoing discourse, and that all the sheets were almost printed, I was earnestly urged by a friend, to say something to secure the foundation I go upon; especially because the learning of Grotius and Dr Hammond had influenced many to follow another way of interpreting the revelation, as the reputation of Mr Baxter had swayed others to think well of the same. And when I urged that Dr More in his mystery of iniquity, and Dr Cressener, in his demonstration of the first principles of the protestant interpretations of the apocalypse, had done this sufficiently already: He replied, that these books were both voluminous and dark, and not easy to be purchased by every one; and, that, therefore, some short account of this matter at this time seemed to be necessary. I urged many things against this, as that this advice came too late, and that should I contract never so much, it would swell this part of my book too much, to keep a due proportion with the other discourses, and indeed make the whole too bulky. But after all, importunity and the respect I bore my friend, prevailed with me,
to

to say something to all those things, that he thought I ought to premise. Therefore, not to spend any longer time in giving the reasons, why I did not speak to these things before in their proper place, or why I do so now: I shall give my thoughts of this book and the first principles of the right interpretation of it in some propositions, which do gradually lay the foundation of what I advanced before.

I. Proposition. The revelation was written by the apostle John, and is a sacred and canonical book of the New Testament.

I hope there is no Christian that will dispute the truth of this proposition with me. For, besides that the stile of John may be easily traced in this book, notwithstanding the difference of the subject from that which he wrote of in his gospel and epistles: he does frequently make mention of himself, and that with such peculiar circumstances. As agree with none but the apostle; as we see chap. 1. verse 1, 2, 4, 9. See also chap. 21. 2. and 22. 8.

I know indeed that some of the ancients doubted of this, as Caius a Latin father, mentioned by Eusebius, Hist. Lib. 3. Cap. 28. and Dionysius of Alexandria, who made a great noise against it for a while, as we see in Eusebius also, hist. Lib. 7. cap. 4. But yet even this man declares that he owns it to be a sacred book, though not written by the apostle John. Wherein he speaks, what we must look upon to be altogether absurd. For if St. John be not the author, it must be an imposture, seeing his name is inserted in it, as being the penman. So that if it be not St. John's, it is no sacred book. Or, if it be a sacred book, the author is none but the beloved apostle. But the weakness and inconsistency of this, denies his reasons against this book, are sufficiently

sufficiently though briefly exposed by Monsieur du Pin, both in his preliminary dissertation to his *bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques*, and in his history of the canon of the books of scripture.

And if this were any argument against the divinity of this book, that some persons have doubted of it, or denied it to be canonical, there is hardly one book in the new testament that would stand the test: Seeing we find in the ancient Church-history that there have been not only particular men, but even sects of them, that have excepted, some against one book, and some against others. And we know, that the epistles of James, and Jude, and the second and third epistles of John, and that admirable epistle to the Hebrews, have been controverted, as well as the apocalypse: of the authority of which neither Papist nor Protestant, Grecian nor Armenian Christian doubts at this day.

And as all Christians do now acquiesce in the revelation, as a canonical book: so excepting those I mentioned, and the hereties called Alogians, all the eminent fathers of the Church received it of old. So did Justin Martyr, *Dialog. cum Tryph.* Irenæus lib. 4. cap. 37. and 50. and lib. 5. cap. 30. and apud Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 8. Tertullian, *adv. Marc.* lib. 3. cap. 5. Clemens Alexandrinus, apud Euseb. lib. 3. cap. 23. Origen in *Mat.* and in *Joh.* and apud Euseb. lib. 6. cap. 25. and Eusebius himself, *hist.* lib. 4. cap. 28. Nay all the other fathers agree in this also, "viz. Epiphanius, Victorinus, Theophilus, Cyprian, Methodius, Jerom;" and other authors quoted by "Eusebius, Epiphanius and Jerom, viz. Melito, Hippolitus, Victorinus, &c.

But for my own part, were all these authorities wanting, there is that in this book itself, that would inforce me to own it as divine. For besides the augustness of its stile,

the wisdom of its contexture, and the purity of its design and counsels, there is something that I want a name for, that commands my belief and veneration, and insinuates itself into my affection and conscience, as if Christ himself breathed something divine in every line. But the clear view of the fulfilling of the several parts of its prophecy, is an argument that even several other books of the new testament want.

II. Proposition. The book of the revelation of John was written after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The notion of Grotius, upon which his interpretation of the Apocalypse is founded, is this ; that the seven kings or heads of the beast, mentioned Rev. 17. 10. are not to be understood of seven several forms of government, but of seven particular emperors, viz. Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus, and that Domitian is the eighth, who was of the seventh, because as he pretends, he governed during his father's absence.

The foundation which he lays, for the probation of this, is that John was banished into Patmos, in the reign of Claudius : But that though he saw his visions then, he did not write them till Vespasian's time. For he must make this last supposition, as well as the first, else his notion would be condemned immediately, seeing it is said, that five of these kings were fallen Rev. 17. 10. that is, says he and Hammond, when he wrote, not when he saw these visions. But how false this is, any body may see with half an eye ; seeing these words are not John's but the angel's to him. And therefore the defenders of this opinion must find out five emperors that were fallen before Claudius, if they will restrict these heads of the beast to particular men : For if the angel spake these words to John in the days of Claudius,

Claudius, they must relate to them that went before or to none.

This is enough to destroy this notion of their's, and I know not how it is possible for any of their admirers to save their credit this way. But seeing the principal thing they found upon, is this, that John saw the apocalyptical visions in the days of Claudius, and that so all, or at least most of the revelation relates to things that fell out before the destruction of Jerusalem; I shall say something further to disprove this assertion, and to confirm the verity of our proposition.

Now there are only two things adduced by Grotius and Hammond to prove, that John was in Patmos in Claudius his reign: the 1st is, that Claudius raised a persecution against both Jews and Christians; and that being the first persecutor, it is probable, that John was banished at that time. The second is, that Epiphanius does expressly assert, that it was by Claudius that John was banished to Patmos.

As to the 1st of these, it is nothing but a supposition, without any proof; for we have no account, either in the Acts of the Apostles, or in any other Writer, that Claudius did ever persecute either Jews or Christians. And Lactantius de Mort. Perf. does expressly assert, that no Emperor did persecute the christians before Nero. It is true, Suetonius says, *Claudius Judæos impulsore Chresto tumultuantes Roma expulit*. And Luke tells us, that Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, which occasioned Aquila and Priscilla; and other Christian Jews, to retire from Rome: but neither of them say, that he persecuted the Christians, or even the Jews. Now, as for the expression of Suetonius, *impulsore Chresto*, or *Chresto*, the meaning must be this, that the Jews that did not believe, going about to stir up the government at Rome, as they did every

where else, (as is plain from the book of the acts) against the Christians, and appearing against them in a tumultuous manner, upon the occasion of Christ; complaints might probably be brought to the Emperor, who no doubt, upon this account, banished all of that nation from Rome: so that Suetonius having a confused notion of Christ, might easily be induced to express himself this way. And now that this was all that Claudius did against the christians, is plain to me from one argument that has escap'd Dr More, but is to me unanswerable, taken from the 18th chapter of the acts; where, after the sacred historian had taken notice of Claudius his banishing the Jews out of Rome, and of Aquila and Priscilla's being lately come upon that account from Italy to Corinth; he tells us of Paul's lodging with them, because he was of the same occupation. But being pressed in spirit, to preach Christ, upon the coming of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia, he goes into their synagogue, and reasons with the Jews and proselytes there, upon this head: and having converted some, particularly Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and Justus, in whose house he afterwards disputed; Crispus, no doubt being thrown out of his office, and Sosthenes put in his stead, and Paul continuing to preach in Justus his house, which joined to the synagogue; the Jews are incensed to such a degree, as to rise tumultuously against Paul. Sosthenes, therefore, the new chief ruler of the synagogue, and the rest of the unbelieving Jews make an insurrection, and seize upon Paul, and carry him to the judgement-seat, before the Proconsul Gallio, that excellent Roman, the elder brother of Seneca. He tells the Jews, that if Paul, or any other man, were guilty of what was lewd, wicked, or unjust, that in that case, he was obliged to punish such persons according as the Roman law and justice did require. But seeing they

they accused Paul of nothing of that kind, but only of doctrinal matters, relating to their own law and religion; he had nothing to do with them; and therefore he drove them all away, and set Paul at liberty, which made the gentiles fall upon Sosthenes the chief author of this tumult, and beat him before the judgement-seat, which Gallio permitted to be done, and connived at, either as judging that he did deserve to be so treated, or as supposing it might prevent the Jews from acting so factiously and tumultuously again. Now, after this short, but exact account of this history, it will be easy to see how precarious and groundless, nay false, Grotius's opinion is, of a persecutions being raised against Jews and Christians, in the days of Claudius. For if there had been any such thing, or any edict for it, how came Gallio to tolerate a public synagogue of the Jews, and suffer Paul to preach openly? or if the christians were only ordered to be persecuted, why did not the Jews use this, as the reason of their accusing Paul, who to be sure wanted not a good-will to have done so, and were not ignorant that this would have been the main argument to prevail with the Proconsul? and had there been any such edict, can we imagine that Gallio was ignorant of it? for so he must have been, seeing he tells the Jews, that he had no orders to punish any man for his religion or sentiments that way, but only those that were guilty of wickedness or lewdness in life. If any say, that his temper was to care for none of these things? I answer, this expression may indeed denote his temper; but I suppose it speaks forth not only that, but his principle and sentiment, as judging it unrighteous to persecute, or punish any man for mere opinion. But, whatever this had been, had there been any edict for persecuting the christians or Jews, he durst not have neglected his orders, especially when the edict must have been so recent, and

when he had what might have past for a just reason of his punishing both the party accusing, and the party accused, viz. their disturbing (as he might have represented it) of the public peace. But, indeed, it is too plain to need any further proof, that Claudius his banishing the Jews out of Rome, was accompanied with no persecution, either against them or against the christians. And this, Dr Hammond confirms, by what he says in his annotations on the 31st verse of the 26th chapter of the acts, forgetting, that this way he destroys his own foundation of interpreting the Revelation: where, upon these words of Luke, that Agrippa, Festus, and Berenice, and the rest of the company, after they had heard Paul's defence, did conclude, that he had done nothing that deserved either death or imprisonment; the doctor observes, that the reason why they did conclude so was, because there had been as yet no edict omitted against the christians, by any of the emperors: and this was the reason also, says he, why Gallio, the Proconsul of Achaia, said publickly, that it was not for him to judge of things that the Roman laws had determined nothing about: For, continues the Doctor, though Claudius had commanded the Jews to leave Italy, by which the christian Jews were forced to go away also, not as they were christians, but because they were Jews; yet, there was yet no law made against christians, as such, at this time. It is true, he says, that John was not only banished, as Aquila and Priscilla were, but confin'd in the isle of Patmos. But he should have given the reason, why John was the only person persecuted: however I shall examine this assertion, and the reason that the Doctor gives for it in other places of his annotations.

We come therefore now, in the 2d place, to consider the testimony of Epiphanius, upon whose credit alone Grotius and Hammond believe that John was in Patmos, in Claudius's

dius's time. And here by the way, I cannot forbear to observe the strange mistake of Dr Lightfoot, who agrees in the main with these learned men, in interpreting the Revelation, in relation to the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore makes John to see these visions long before that; but has this peculiar to himself, that he imagines John was not banished there, but went thither voluntarily to preach the gospel to the inhabitants; whereas John himself doth expressly tell us, that he was there as a sufferer and witness for Christ: chap. i. verse 9. "I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ:" so that, as this refutes Dr Lightfoot, and confirms what Grotius and Hammond agree in, that John was not in Patmos as a traveller, but as a prisoner and sufferer; so it is enough to refute even them also: for the words do plainly insinuate, that John was not the only persecuted man at this time, but that there was then a persecution raised against all Christians in general; and therefore we may be assured that he was not in that Island in the days of Claudius, in whose time we have proved there was no persecution.

But to return, Epiphanius says indeed, That John saw his visions in Patmos, in the reign of Claudius, Heres. 51. Sect. 12. and 33. But can his single authority weigh down all antiquity, that says the contrary? shall we believe him rather than *Ireneus*, who liv'd two hundred years before him, and was the scholar of Polycarp, the scholar of John himself? Now what can be plainer than the words of *Ireneus*, lib. 5. cap. 30. "if his name (*viz.* that of Antichrist, or the beast), had been openly to be divulged at this time, it would no doubt have been told by him that saw the apocalyptical visions: for it is not a long time since he saw

saw these, but even in some sense, in our own time, viz. towards the end of the reign of Domitian." And that Ireneus had just reason to say, that John's seeing the revelation was almost in his own time, or within the memory of the men of that generation, if not his own also, is plain from chronology: for he being the scholar of Polycarp, who was martyr'd in the year of Christ 167, and being himself put to death in the year 202, if we suppose that he wrote this but ten or twelve years before his death, yet he might justly say, that there was but about an age's difference from his time, and that wherein John saw the revelation: for if John was in Patmos, towards the end of Domitian's reign, it could not be sooner in any propriety of speech, than the year 90, seeing he began his government Anno 81, and died 96. And who can doubt but Ireneus does deliver here, what his master Polycarp had told him? for as none knew the history of John, better than that worthy person, so none had better opportunity to know what related to this matter than Ireneus, by reason of his long and intimate acquaintance with him. This seem'd a foundation sure enough of old to Eusebius: and if some men had not some private ends to promote, by opposing it, might be a sufficient foundation to all men still. Let us, therefore, hear what this learned historian says on this head: "In those days, says Eusebius, Euseb. " Eccl. hist. l. 3. c. 23. (viz. in the days of Cerdo, Ignatius, and Simeon, of whom he had been speaking) the " Apostle John, the beloved disciple was yet alive, inspecting the churches of Asia, having returned after Domitian's death from the Island, whether he had been banished. Now that John was then alive, it is enough to adduce the testimony of two persons of great authority, who are worthy of all belief, and were ever eminent for defending the truth, I mean, Ireneus, and

" Clemens

“ Clemens Alexandrinus ; the first of whom, in his second
“ book against Heresies, speaks thus : All the presbyters,
“ says Irenæus, who lived familiarly with the Apostle John
“ in Asia, do assure us, that they had this related to them
“ from John himself ; for he lived with them even unto
“ the times of Trajan. In this third book also, Irenæus
“ gives us the same account, in these words ; the church
“ of Ephesus also, which was founded by the Apostle
“ Paul, and was afterwards under the care of the Apostle
“ John, until Trajan’s time, is an eminent witness of
“ what was delivered to us by the Apostles. And be-
“ sides him, Clemens likewise, says Eusebius, does not
“ only take notice of the same time, but gives a particular
“ story relating to him, in that book of his, which bears
“ his title ; what rich man can be saved ? and then Euse-
“ bius recites the story at length, which were too long to
“ insert here.

Now if John lived to the days of Trajan, he must have
been a prodigiously old man, according to Epiphanius,
who says he was 90 years of age, in Claudius his time.
For giving him all the allowance that can be desired, viz.
that John was so old in the last year of Claudius, and that
he died in the first year of Trajan, he must have been 134
years old at least, when he died ; seeing Claudius died,
A. C. 54, and Trajan did not begin to reign until the
year 98, though others say, with more probability, not
until A. C. 100. Now, besides that it is not easy to be-
lieve, that so thoughtful and laborious a man should live
so long, the improbability of what Epiphanius says, ap-
pears further from this ; that if in the year 54, from Christ’s
birth, John was 90 years of age, he must have been 36
older than Christ. And if so, it seems very odd, that
Christ should say to him, from the cross, man behold thy
mother, and to Mary, woman behold thy son. For as
this

this seems to say, that he was at least as young as Christ, this account makes him an old man of near 70 years of age at that time. Which, as it must suppose, Mary to be a very aged person of between 80 and 90 at least: so it contradicts the constant and unanimous tradition of the church, which supposes him to be very young at that time. Whence Baronius says, that he was but 25 years old. And Nicephorus relates, out of an epistle of Evodius Bishop of Antioch, that the virgin herself was not then 50; seeing Christ as he asserts, was born when she was but 15 years old.

Whence it appears, how little we ought to trust Epiphanius, in opposition to all antiquity besides. Which made Drusus say, *scimus omnes Epiphanium in multis graviter hallucinatum.* And upon the same account, Petavius scruples not to correct him: for where he has it *imperante Claudio*, he writes this short note in the margin, *mendose pro Domitiano.*

But the truth is, though I am not willing to detract from this authors credit, yet I suspect it was not so much an error of judgment as of will, or that which some call a *pia Fraus*, that made him desert the tradition of the church in this matter. For his telling us this story is upon the occasion of an objection of the Montanists against the Apocalypse, taken from this supposition, that there was no church in Thyatira, when John writ the revelation: which it seems, he thought would serve another turn, if he inverted it, by telling them that John said so only by way of prophecy. Whence he proceeds to prove the verity and divinity of the book: and therefore thought his argument would be the more cogent, the further he run up the date of the revelation, and John's being in Patmos. But as this was a poor as well as unlawful shift: so I shall leave

him and his authority both, to those that have more time and leisure to consider them further.

For to me there is proof enough from the revelation itself, to assure us, that it was written in Domitian's time. For it is plain not only from ch. i. verse 9. which I touched upon before, but from the strain of all the seven epistles which John writes to the churches of Asia, that at the time of his being in Patmos or rather before, there had been a severe persecution upon them. Therefore he tells the church of Ephesus, that she had laboured and endured, and had not fainted under the troubles that had come upon her, chap. ii. ver. 2. And so the Christians of Smyrna are told of their tribulation, and exhorted not to fear imprisonment or any other thing that they should suffer, v. 9. 10. This being added, that they must expect tribulation for ten days: which by the way, is no inconsiderable hint; seeing the persecution of Domitian, from the first beginning of it, lasted about ten years, which, in the dialect of St John, are called days. I might mention many other things, but this is plain, that the church was under persecution every where at that time, if it were only from these and the like expressions, be thou faithful unto death; and to him that overcometh will I do so and so. And besides all these things, mention is made of an eminent martyr of the church of Pergamus, chap. ii. ver. 13. whose name was Antipas. For the Apostle John, or rather Christ, is so express in relating this, that we may deny any thing in the Bible, if we deny this matter of fact. I am not concerned here, with the allegories some fanciful men make upon this name, when they tell us that it signifies as much as Antipater or Antipapa: nor have I any thing to do with the stories that later authors tell us of him, of his being bishop of Pergamus, and of his being burnt in a brazen

bull,

bull, with other circumstantial matters relating to his person or death. Let Aretha, therefore, Metaphrastes, Cedrenus, Pererius, Surius, Baronius, Cornelius a Lapide, and a thousand more be supposed to mistake in their relating this story: yet no man shall ever make me disbelieve what St John says of this matter. And I must have further proof, than ever I expect to receive, before I can believe that all these authors are mistaken, as to the foundation of their relation: when they unanimously tell us, that this Martyr suffered in the reign of Domitian.

And now I suppose I have said enough to prove that John was not in Patmos before the reign of Domitian. And if so, the foundation of Grotius and his followers falls to the ground. So that these Corollaries must naturally follow from what has been said, and remain as certain truths.

1. Corol. "The visions of the Apocalypse relate neither to the Romish nor Jewish state, before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.
- 2 Corol. The revelation relates to the church and her adversaries, as to those things that were to fall out after the everſion of the Jewish state."

Now before I proceed, I must desire the reader to observe the distribution, which Christ himself makes of the subject treated of in this book, ch. i. verse. 19. when he commands John, saying, Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter, where it is plain, three things are distinguished. 1. The things which John had seen, viz. the emblems, figures and Hieroglyphical representations, that had been objected to his eyes or imagination, from v. 12. to v. 19. Then 2. The things which were existent, and in being at the

time when John was in Patmos, *viz.* the churches planted by the Apostles, particularly the seven Asiatic ones, to which John had a peculiar relation, and to which he was ordered to direct seven epistles. And then, 3. The things which were to fall out hereafter, *viz.* the prophetic part of the book beginning with the 4th chapter; as is plain from the 1st verse thereof, Where after John had written what related to both the former heads; he tells us, that he heard a voice, like the voice of a trumpet, talking with him, and commanding him now to begin and write the things which he was to shew him, and represent to him emblematically, which were to be, after the expiration of the other things mentioned before, which were said then to exist, *viz.* the then present circumstances of the Asiatic churches.

So that this is a sufficient answer to those, that object, that this book cannot be supposed to contain a prophecy of the state of the church for any long time, seeing it is said, that the things prophesied of in the revelation, must shortly come to pass, chap. i. verse 1. For seeing we have a double explication of this expression, *viz.* chap. i. verse 19, and chap. 4. verse 1. I ask, whether we are to stick so to the letter of the first short proposition, as to reject the explication given of it in the following places? it was very proper indeed, when some things in this book did concern the then present state of the church, and some other things that did relate to the future condition of it; to say, as in chap. i. verse 1. that the prophecy related to things that were shortly to come to pass; because not only were those things to be soon fulfilled that concerned the churches of Asia at that time; but the other things were then also to enter upon their begun accomplishment. But that we might not imagine that the whole of this book was to be

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accomplished shortly, we are told, ch. i. v. 19. and ch. iv. y. 1. that what related to future time, was to be accomplished and fall out afterwards. And that, accordingly, we might see the full extent of this prophecy, we are led down from scene to scene, till we are brought to the end and consummation of all things at last. And now seeing we have proved that this book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, we must desire our antagonists to find out something else, to which they can accommodate all the figures of the revelation, before we quit our interpretation, merely because they dislike it, though they can offer us nothing in the room of the same. So that until they be able to enlighten our minds, with another scheme than that of Grotius, which we have sufficiently, though briefly refuted: I must be bold to lay down this further Corollary, which is the same with our first postulatum in the preceding discourse.

3 Corol. " That the revelation contains the series of all the remarkable events and changes of the state of the Christian church to the end of the world.

And the same distribution of this book, into three parts I have mentioned, lays a sufficient foundation for another proposition also.

III. Proposition. " The seven epistles directed to as many churches in the lesser Asia, do not immediately relate to the christian church in general, and therefore cannot be interpreted prophetically, in any proper sense, as if they did denote so many periods of time in relation to it.

I might demonstrate this, were it needful. But seeing it makes nothing for my design, which way soever men understand it, I shall say nothing to it now: especially because the learned Witsius, my professor and master formerly, has sufficiently demonstrated what I assert in this proposition, in his *diatribe de septem epistolarum Apocalypticarum sensu historico & prophetico*, published in his *Miscellanea Sacra*.

And neither have I time to prove other propositions, that might appear more necessary: only seeing the key of interpreting the Apocalypse, which the angel gives John, chap. 17. is so very plain, I cannot but build another proposition upon it.

IV. Prop. " Babylon the great, or the Apocalyptical beast, taken in a general sense, as it is represented, with its seven heads, and ten horns, is no other than an emblem of the Roman empire.

For besides that Dr Cressener, and others, have proved this, the text itself is demonstration enough to all those that will be at pains, attentively and impartially, to consider it. For seeing the angel does expressly say, that by this, was meant the seven-hill'd city, ver. 9. and the city that then did reign over the kings of the earth, verse 18. I cannot imagine what he could have said more plainly upon this head.

But seeing he represents the empire, under the peculiar consideration, of its being governed by a woman, who is called the great whore, or adulteress; therefore this lays a foundation for another proposition.

- V. Prop. " The seven-headed beast, more especially considered, as it is represented as rid upon by the whore, doth represent Rome to us as it is under the ecclesiastical government of the Papacy, or apostate church of Rome.

This the angel does sufficiently insinuate, chap. 17. v. 2. when he says, the beast which thou sawest, was, and yet is not at this time; *i. e.* The beast which thou sawest, is indeed the same Roman empire which was before, and was represented to thee, chap. xiii. v. 1. But it is not yet, in another sense, *viz.* as now thou beholdest it under the rule of a whore, or the apostate church of Rome. For this last ecclesiastical form of government is not yet come, but it is to come (when it ariseth) out of the bottomless pit, in order to go thither again, into endless perdition.

And if this be once granted, then that will naturally follow, which I am to represent as another proposition.

- Prop. VI. " The seven kings, represented by the seven heads of the beast, are no other than the seven forms of supreme government, that did successively obtain among the Romans.

This the angel doth likewise sufficiently insinuate, v. 10. which can never be understood of particular emperors, at least not of those Grotius fixed upon, whose opinion this way we have already refuted. And therefore, seeing five of the forms of the Roman government, were fallen in John's time, *viz.* kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes, (as Tacitus reckons them, *Annal. Lib. 1. Sect. 1.*) and seeing the imperial authority was that which was in being then, we have no reason to quit

so plain and exact an interpretation, until more be said against it, than ever has been yet produced to the world.

And were it not that I am confined so much now, both as to time, and lest this postscript should swell to an enormous bulk, I should not fear to attempt the demonstration of these last propositions, and to proceed to others that would lay a further and more strong foundation still, of that method of interpreting the revelation, which the generality of protestants are agreed in. But I hope I have said enough for this place, to secure the principles I go upon, by which the things which I proposed at first as postulata are, I think sufficiently proved. And seeing my principal design in writing this postscript, was to refute the hypothesis that Grotius and Hammond go upon: I leave it to the candid and impartial thoughts of the reader, whether I have not said enough to prove it to be altogether precarious.

And now seeing every one must see how much I have been straitned, both as to time and paper, in this postscript, I hope the reader will pass the more favourable construction on what defects he may observe in my performance, either as to matter, method, or the calculations of time, which I have run upon; in which, if there be any thing obscure or confused, the study of brevity, and dispatch has occasioned it. But since I have advanced nothing, in relation to future time, but by way of conjecture, nor indeed asserted any thing (in relation to that part of the prophecy which is fulfilled dogmatically and positively, but only proposed my thoughts, after the manner of a rational probability; I suppose no man will think it worth his while to make a noise about little mistakes, that perhaps I may have been guilty of, through haste or inadvertency. But if any person shall take occasion, from what I have

said, to study the Apocalypse to better advantage than I have attained to do, and shall give the world a better built, and more clearly connected scheme of the visions of this book; I assure him, that none shall more rejoice in such a performance than I, and I shall be one of the first to return him thanks for refuting me. For "truth is all I seek after, and that it may ever, and in all respects prevail, is, and shall be my constant prayer and study.

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*The Certainty and Wonderfulness of God's dwelling with men on
the Earth.*

2 CHRON. VI. 18.

*But will God in very deed dwell with men on the Earth?
Behold, Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot con-
tain thee; how much less this house which I have built?*

INTRODUCTION.

DIS-
IT was the glory and happiness of the Israelitish nation
of old, that the Almighty God took upon him the
character, and entered into the relation of being their
king, owning and governing them as his people and sub-
jects, in a peculiar manner above the rest of the world.
He laid the foundation of this their impropriation, by ma-
ny preceding steps, in order to engage them to himself,
for

for the great and admirable purposes and ends he had in prospect and view. Therefore, after he had advanced Shem to the dignity of the primogeniture of mankind, though a younger son of Noah, he was pleased to make choice of Abraham, a Branch of the family of Arphaxad a younger son of Shem, to be the root, from whence this remarkable nation should spring. And that they might further discern how much they owed to the divine favour, both their being and their advancement to the honour and privileges of being the first born of nations, (as God himself expressly calls them : he so ordered matters, that their second parent Isaac should deduce his original from his miraculous and energetical operation, more than from his father and mother : that both he and his posterity might see and acknowledge that God was their great parent, and was therefore justly intitled to the sovereignty over them as his children. And that he might engage them still further to himself, he makes choice of their third parent Jacob, though the yougest son of Isaac, to be the first in dignity and privilege, even against the design of the father : that thus also they might see that it was God himself, and not Isaac, that raised them up, and laid the foundation of all their glory and felicity, as well as of that peculiar regal government he was afterwards to exert over them.

But that he might bring them under his government as a nation, when they had multiplied so as to constitute one; he did not think it enough to have made a covenant with their fathers for this end, unless he had their own unanimous consent. And therefore, though he had brought them into Egypt, and made them to increase there; though he had defeated the attempts of Pharaoh and his people, and brought them out from thence by a series of miracles; though he had enriched them with Egyptian spoils, and destroyed their insulting enemies by the same

miracle

miracle by which he preserved them: Yet still he would be their king only with their own consent. And as this was given by them, in their agreement to follow the conduct of God and of Moses his servant: so was it ratified by the ordinance of the passover, and solemnly celebrated in an universal triumph and song of praise to their God and king, upon the defeat and destruction of Pharaoh and his army, by the waves of the red sea.

Upon this foundation it was that he took up his special residence among them, taking them under his immediate protection, giving them laws, manifesting himself unto them, and in a word ruling and governing them; as a father his children, a shepherd his flock, a master his servants, a doctor his scholars, a king his subjects, or a general his army: for under all these relations he represents his relation to Israel, and his government of them. But of all these, the character and relation of king, is that which he delights to be known most by, as being indeed most peculiarly appropriated to him. So that * Josephus had just reason to call this antient government a divine one, or a theocracy. For to this purpose Moses himself speaks, when he tells them, that they were "an holy people unto the Lord their God; for that the Lord had chosen them to be a special people to himself, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Upon which account, he tells them, it was, that God made a covenant with them in Horeb, the substantial part of which was contained in the decalogue. And hence it was, that they ever afterwards owned themselves the subjects of God in a peculiar sense, in which no other nation stood related to him. Therefore, the Psalmist calls them a people near unto God; and pronounceth them to be specially happy,

* Lib. 2. cont. Appion. 1071.

happy, above all others, because God was their Lord and king. And it were easy to shew, by the whole management of that people, that God ruled them as a sovereign prince rules his subjects. But this is no proper place for such a discourse.

However one thing I cannot forbear to take notice of, *viz.* that besides the design God had of doing good to this people, by bringing them under such a divine government; we may justly conclude, that he had further and more glorious ends in all this. And two such are plainly enough hinted to us in the scripture. The first of these was, no doubt, to keep up the memory of the true God among men, which was in hazard otherwise to be obliterated, through the idolatry in worship and corruption in morals, that had infected the world, to such a degree, that even the Jews themselves could hardly be restrained from falling in with such universally received customs. The wisdom and goodness of God was such to the race of men, that when neither the memory of the deluge, of the defeat of their project at Babel, of the punishment of the Sodomites, with such like providences, had wrought any reformation upon them; he was pleased, after all other methods had failed, to keep up the knowledge of himself in the world, by this wonderful erection of the Hebrews into a theocracy or divine monarchy; that thus other nations might be enlightened and reclaimed, or otherwise left without excuse, in proportion to their opportunities of knowing the Jewish nation. That this is not a precarious supposition, we may learn even from Moses: "Keep therefore, says he, and do all these things, which God hath commanded you by me. For this is your wisdom in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say: surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God

so nigh unto him, as the Lord our God is in all things, that we call upon him for? and what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law, which I set before you this day?" and to the same purpose speaks Solomon here, in this very chapter where our text is. "Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of the people Israel, but is come from a far country, for thy great names-sake, and thy mighty hand and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this house: then hear thou from the heavens, thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel."

Another great end God had in this wonderful erection of the Israelites, was to pave the way for Christianity, as the whole new testament, particularly the determination of the Apostolical synod at Jerusalem, and the demonstration of this in the epistle to the Hebrews, doth plainly shew. For the whole Mosaical law of rites and ceremonies was but a subservient institution made use of as a fence to the moral law contained in the ten commandments, which our Saviour sums up in love to God, and to our neighbour as ourselves, assuring us that these were all that was material, moral, and of perpetual use, that the law and prophetic writings did contain. And even Moses himself tells the Israelites the same thing, when he represents the covenant between God and them to stand in the decalogue. For the lord, says he, spake to you with an audible and articulate voice from Mount Sinai; though without assuming any shape or similitude, to prevent Idolatry :) and the lord declared thus unto you his covenant, even ten commandments, which he wrote upon two tables of stone. Whence the Apostle speaks of the Mosaical law, in a very contemptible manner, as to the ceremonial

monial part of it, in regard of the Christian institution. For sometimes he calls it the law of a carnal commandment. Sometimes he calls its ordinances beggarly rudiments. And elsewhere tells us plainly, that its institutions were merely carnal or political, imposed on the Jews until the institution of Christianity, which he calls the time of reformation. So that we could never give any satisfactory reason, why God did enjoin those antient rites with such solemnity and strictness, if we did not consider them to be of a typical nature and institution, relating to the heavenly dispensation of Christianity, as dark yet significant Hieroglyphics or emblems thereof, in regard of which the law was the Jewish school-master leading them unto, and pointing out unto them, our Lord Jesus Christ. Whence we are assured, that the law was only a shadow of good things to come, but was not the true or perfect image of them, So that there is as great a difference between Judaism and Christianity, in relation to heaven and the perfection thereof; as there is between the dark shadow and curious image or picture of a man, or any other thing.

Nay the Apostle runs the difference yet higher, when he makes this such as is between the shadow and body itself. For, says he, the Jewish ordinances, such as their meats and drinks, their holy days, and their new moons and sabbaths, were all but a shadow of things to come; but the body (or substance, anti-type, and completion, to which all these referred) was of Christ, *that is*, consisted of his actions and institutions. And in like manner, we are told, that the Aaronical priests did only serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things. Nay I might shew further (were this a proper place for it) that the very periods of the Jewish dispensation were figurative of the Christian: and that illustrious men, that make the greatest figure in the old testament history, were types

of Christ, in some respect or other. Of David the case is so plain, (as well as of Moses and Joshua) that Christ is frequently prophesied of, even under * his name. And he that considers the words and scope of the seventy second psalm, will not I suppose doubt but Solomon is to be lookt upon as a type likewise, I might shew this at large, in relation both to the personal qualifications of these illustrious princes, and the character of their several governments: but these considerations would lead me out too far for an introduction. I shall therefore only take notice of this here, that both the Jewish church and state were arrived to the highest step and pitch in Solomon's time. For then was the Ark, the most eminent symbol of God's presence with and dwelling among the Jews, taken from a portable habitation and movable condition, and plac'd in a fixed house and most magnificent palace. Whence it came to pass, that the temple and the ark became the most illustrious of all the types of Christ, as we shall afterwards have occasion to observe further.

In this temple God is said, as elsewhere, so here in our text, to dwell, or take up his habitation, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it. And this being the only word of the text that requires any critical survey, it may not be amiss to take some notice of it, before we come to explain the words doctrinally. The Hebrew word *ישב* signifies properly to sit or rest, to dwell or remain in any place, as an house or habitation. It is variously rendered by the septuagint; sometimes by *οικέω*, to dwell; sometimes by *ἐνοικέω*, to dwell in a place; sometimes by *παροικέω*, to dwell by or besides one; and sometimes also by *καθίμαι*, *ἐγκάθιμαι*, *παρακαθίμαι*, *συνκαθίμαι*, *καθίζω*, &c. But most frequently we find this word rendered by *κατοικέω*, which as it signifies sometimes simply to dwell, so at other times denotes one's dwelling in a place, as one that hath a pro-

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* See Hof.

perty in the same, (even as a man does that dwells in his own house as the paterfamilias or master of the house and father of the family does ;) and not as a lodger that has no proper right to it. Of both which senses they that please may observe examples in our best Lexicons.

Now I suppose it is in this most proper sense, that God is said to dwell with the Jews, in Jerusalem, in Sion, in the temple, and in the mercy-seat above the ark, or between the Cherubims. For he did so dwell there, as nowhere else in this lower world. But yet we must not suppose that God is said to dwell in the temple and among the Jews, exclusively to the rest of the world. For God is said to dwell elsewhere in a more common sense: for which I might adduce many scriptural expressions. But I shall restrict myself at this time to two. And the first is, that place where God is said to dwell in the deluge or in the sea; or as we translate it, he sitteth upon the flood. But the word which we render there to fit, is the same both in the Hebrew and in the version of the seventy with the word of our text. Which best agrees with rest of the psalm, where the thunder is called the voice of God, and is described as a demonstration of God's dwelling in the elementary World, as king of the Universe. And indeed the three last verses of that psalm discover to us both the more special dwelling of God in the temple, and the more general sense of his dwelling in the world. In his temple, says the psalmist, doth every one speak of his glory. For there he doth in a peculiar manner discover and manifest himself. But that we may not imagine that God has confined his abode among men to that one place, he adds, The Lord dwelleth in or upon the deluge: yea, the Lord sitteth king for ever. For the clouds above, and the waters in them, and the sea below, and in a word the whole world is the temple where God manifests his power.

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And though he be specially king of the Jews, and those that own and serve him ; seeing in a peculiar sense the Lord will give strength unto his people, and bless them with peace : yet we are not to imagine that God's being said to dwell in the temple is exclusive altogether of his dwelling in the other parts of the world ; no more than we can say, that God's being king of the Jews excludes him from being king over the other nations of the earth, though in another sense. For if we were thus to interpret the words of scripture, we must also say, that because God is said to dwell in heaven above, therefore in no sense he can be said to dwell in this world among men. But God himself has told us, that though the heaven be his throne, where he is said to manifest his glory chiefly, yet the earth is his footstool, where he leaves vestiges of himself.

Another place to this purpose is, where God is said, according to our version, " to sit upon the circle of the earth, the inhabitants whereof are but as grasshoppers before him ; and that he stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." But, our translators had at least as good reason to render the Hebrew word to dwell, in the beginning of the verse, as they have done in the end of it. For, the original word here is the same that is translated thus in our text. And besides, the whole scope of the chapter, leads us in to understand the prophet's words after this manner. For the context is a magnificent and elegant account of the glory of God, taken from his creating and governing the world. From whence the prophet expresses the folly of those that thought to represent God by statues and images. What, says he, " have ye not heard, have ye not known, hath it not been told you, that the great God cannot be pictured, nor confined to any spot of this world ? For why, He is infinitely greater than the whole world. But if he may

be said to dwell in any place, it is every where. "For he dwells upon the circle, or whole spherical circumference of this earth, and among all its inhabitants, though they be but as grasshoppers in his sight, which hop up and down upon its surface. But neither is he confined to this little terraqueous globe; for he dwells above also in the celestial regions, having stretched them forth as a tent to dwell in." So, that it is plain here, that God is said to dwell, not only in the temple, and among the Jews, but every where also in the whole world. And therefore, immediately after these words, the prophet gives us an account of some effects of his government of the world, as evidences of his dwelling upon it as the rightful, powerful, and just King thereof. For, says Isaiah, "he bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. He bringeth out all the hosts of created things by number, calling them all by names; making them to serve the purposes for which he made them. He gives power to the faint; and, as he gives the young men, and the strong, frequent proofs of their own weakness; so he gives his own faithful servants many evidences of his tenderness and kindness, as well as of his power in supporting them.

This therefore, and the like phrases, as they are to be understood in a comparative sense; so to understand the meaning of this expression, we must strip it of its metaphor. For, dwelling is not only attributed to persons, but to virtues or other things. Thus the scripture tells us, that in the days of Christ, "Judgment should dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful fields. Where it is plain, that the dwelling of judgment, must import no more, but the discovery of it, and the faithful execution or practice thereof. So, that when God is said to dwell in any place, nothing else can

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be understood, but "his manifesting himself in the continued acts of his providence and care, in a way of power, justice, or kindness."

Thus he is said to dwell upon the flood, and upon the circle of the earth, in as far as he manifests his government of this lower world by his providence. For this kingdom of his ruleth over all; and this way, and by his works of creation, he makes known his eternal power and Godhead. For "he leaves not himself without witness even among heathens and barbarians; for in him all things live, and move, and have their being."

But, in a more special sense, he is said to have dwelt among the Jews, as I have already observed, especially after the temple was built. For then, and there it was, that he gave more conspicuous discoveries of himself than to all the world besides. Now it is remarkable, that God speaks of his dwelling in the temple, in such a manner, as if he had not dwelt in any place before. For, when David tells Nathan, that he intended to build a house for God to dwell in: The Lord speaks to the prophet thus: "Go tell my servant David, thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in? Whereas, I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, but have walked in a tent and tabernacle, &c." And yet it cannot be supposed, that God in no sense dwelt in the tabernacle, and among Israel, before the building of the temple. For God had not only assured the Israelites, that "in all places where he should record his name, he would come unto them and bless them. But he had also told them, that the design of making the sanctuary and tabernacle was, that he might dwell among them. Only, in a more peculiar sense, he is said to have dwelt in the temple than in the tabernacle, upon the account of its being a more fixed and permanent place of a-

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bode. Whence we see, that a more eminent sense of a word must not be taken as exclusive of other acceptations and accommodations of the same.

For we must remember that God is said to dwell in heaven in a more peculiar sense than he ever dwelt in the temple; seeing, there he manifests his glory in a far more wonderful and excellent manner than all that with which he filled the temple of old. Therefore, Solomon, in the words of our text, is ravished with wonder, to think, "that seeing the heavens could not contain God, he should yet condescend in any sense to dwell with men on the earth, and in the temple he had made. And therefore, St Stephen speaks after this manner to the Jews, who boasted of their temple, as if God had confined his presence to them and it: "It is true," says he, "Solomon built God a house. Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet. Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. What house then will ye build me, saith the Lord? Or, what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"

And surely, if God was said to dwell in the temple, and among the Jews of old, we have just reason to believe that he does so in the Christian church. For, though we should not be able to give instances where this word dwelling is used in this sense; yet, if we find the thing itself asserted in other ways of speaking, it is enough to us. Now, I suppose we will grant, that in what place soever we come to worship, some object of adoration is supposed to be there. And I think that the woman of Samaria and our Saviour both suppose this, when they discourse of God's being worshipped in the temples of Samaria and Jerusalem; for a temple, without a relation to a Deity dwelling in it, is a contradiction in the sense both of Jews and

and Pagans. Now, says our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, "the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerutalem, shall any worship the Father. And yet I must tell you, (says he) that there is no comparison to be made between your temple and that at Jerutalem, seeing God never owned your temple as he has done that; neither can ye ever prove that God dwelt in your temple, as we know he has done in the other. However, (says he) the time is coming, when he will not confine his abode in such a manner as he did to the Jewish temple of old, to any particular places; but, wherever there are spiritual and true worshippers of God, there will he manifest himself." And, if therefore, God send his ordinances any where, and have true worshippers, we may justly say that God dwells in that place. For if Satan be said to dwell, where he prevails and has many servants; why, may we not, upon the same reason, say that God dwells in the church and among his people; especially, when we remember that the church is called "an house and holy temple of the Lord, built up for an habitation of God through the Spirit?" And surely, if where Christ is by his Spirit, God may justly be said to dwell; we are assured that God dwells in the Christian church, where his ordinances are; for he has promised to be with his servants even to the end of the world. And this is so certain, that he has told us, that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be also in the midst of them."

But I confess there is a higher acceptation of God's dwelling, than all these I have mentioned, when this phrase is used in relation to Christ. For the word is taken sometimes in this most peculiar and proper sense, when we are told, "that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily," or substantially, and not in a figurative

rative sense; in which sense more or less he is said to dwell in the world, in the temple, in the church, and in heaven. "For it hath pleased the Father, that in this Saviour all fulness should dwell.

And, as God is said to dwell in Christ; so is He and Christ said to dwell in holy persons, though in a figurative sense. For our Saviour tells us, "that if any man love him, he will manifest himself unto him; and that his Father and he will come unto him, and make their abode with him." "Therefore," says he, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me. For Christ is said to dwell in the hearts of true Christians by faith.

Thus having shewed how variously God's dwelling in a place is used, that we may have liberty to accommodate this phrase to several purposes afterwards, as our subject may require: I now return to the consideration of this, which our text doth more immediately furnish us with. Let us therefore call to mind, that the temple was the most illustrious type of Christ, of any we know. For it was the only place of God's public residence among the Jews, as king of that people, towards which they were to pray, in which all sacrifices and oblations were offered up, whence he gave his commands and issued forth his edicts, where he returned answers to the people, and where he was consulted for that purpose, and in a word, where he manifested his presence and revealed his will: It having been agreed upon before between God and that people, that this place should be thus set apart and dedicated for all these ends, until Christ himself the fulness of all should come into his own temple. For which purposes, after God had allowed Solomon to build that house, when it came to be finished, he and all the people do jointly agree

to consecrate the same to God in a most solemn manner. In which work Solomon speaks first, as the mouth of God, to the whole nation, acting as his delegate or herald, as we see here from v. 1. to v. 11. inclusive: And then he acts as the representative of the people to God, in that most admirable address and prayer he puts up from, v. 12. to the end of this chapter. And God, upon the other hand, doth solemnly ratify all that Solomon and the people did and prayed for; by consuming the sacrifice with heavenly fire, and filling the whole house with divine glory; confirming thus the covenant on his part, as we see in the beginning of the seventh chapter. Upon which Solomon and the people return their acknowledgment and thanks to their great king, by numerous and costly sacrifices, and keep seven days in solemn feasting with joy and gladness, as we see ch. vii. v. 4--7. After all which solemnity, God concludes the whole work, by giving a distinct answer to Solomon's prayer in a dream or night-vision: In which he shews his acceptance of this dedicatory address, and upon what conditions he does so; annexing promises to them upon supposition of their obedience and threatnings, in case they turned rebels against him. Of all which we have an account in the next chapter, from v. 12. to the end. But if we desire a more exact knowledge of this memorable transaction, we may compare this account of it, with that which is given us in the first book of Kings, the eighth and ninth chapters.

But it is time I should now proceed to the direct consideration of these words which I have read. And seeing there is no material difference to be found among the several copies and versions of greatest authority with learned men, as to various readings: I shall not trouble you further with any thing relating to the verbal interpretation of the text, but proceed to consider the meaning and sense

sense thereof. And this I suppose cannot be in the dark to any that will attentively consider what I have already said by way of preliminary considerations ; especially, if he do not only remember the work that Solomon and the Jews are now about, but read with attention this dedicatory address and prayer to God, of which our text makes a part.

Let us therefore premise this one thing further, and give you the sum and scope of this admirable prayer, in a short paraphrase.

“ O Lord our God, says Solomon, how happy is this
“ people of Israel, who have thee to be their God and
“ king ; in comparison of whom, nay besides whom, there
“ is no God, either in heaven or earth : Who, notwithstanding thy glory and greatness, art pleased thus to enter into special covenant with us thy servants, shewing
“ mercy unto us, and accepting of our services, when they
“ are sincere, though poor and imperfect. Therefore it is,
“ O our God and sovereign, that I am emboldened to desire, and hope that thou wilt fulfil what thou didst promise to David my father, assuring him that his house
“ and throne should remain for ever, upon condition that
“ his children should continue to obey thy law. Now,
“ then, O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified,
“ which thou hast spoken to thy servant David.

“ But while I talk of this, I am wrapt up in wonder
“ and amazement ! Is it then so indeed ! Is it true ! Is it
“ certain ! Nay, is it possible ! That God can condescend
“ so far, as to dwell after this manner with men on the
“ earth, or allow them to converse with and worship him,
“ by so near an approach, and in immediate acts of adoration and service ! What, is it possible that it should be
“ thus ! When lo ! the heaven, even the highest and most
“ glorious heaven cannot contain thee, nor be looked upon

“ as a sufficient temple or palace for thee to dwell in, or
“ be supposed worthy of so great an inhabitant ; Is it then
“ to be conceived that this house, built by one of thy finite
“ and imperfect creatures here below, can be honoured
“ with thy presence and residence, or be accepted by thee
“ as the chief seat of thy empire over us ?

“ But yet, O Lord, seeing we have done the best we
“ could, lo, here thy poor servant doth prostrate himself
“ before thee, in the name, and as the mouth of this thy
“ people ; and, encouraged by thy promise to David my
“ father, doth humbly beseech thee to come thyself into
“ this temple ; whether the ark, the symbol of thy pre-
“ sence is already brought. Come therefore thyself hither
“ also, and let thine eyes be ever open upon this place ;
“ and thy name, and what thou makest thyself known by,
“ be continually in it ; that so the pledges and evidences
“ of thy presence and love may never be wanting here, but
“ that thine ears may ever be found to be open to the
“ prayers of thy people in or towards this house, as the
“ visible place of thy residence among us.

“ Whatever then be the case of thy people, let them be
“ heard, accepted and succoured, upon their sincere and
“ humble supplications unto thee : Whether this be a mat-
“ ter of justice between man and man, in dark and intri-
“ cate cases, which cannot be determined in an ordinary
“ way ; or a matter of public safety, when their enemies
“ are like to be too hard for them, upon the account of
“ thy just desertion of them for their sins : Or when thou
“ hast punished them by famine, pestilence, or any other
“ calamity. And let not these thy favours be confined to
“ native Israelites ; but let them be extended also to stran-
“ gers that shall come here to worship and serve thee, in
“ opposition to all false gods and ways of worship. That
“ thus the heathen nations may be allured and engaged
“ to

“ to fall in with thy service, and that the whole world may
 “ see thy glory. And do thou act, O Lord, as the king
 “ and general of thy people, when they are engaged in a
 “ lawful war against thine and their enemies ; that through
 “ thy conduct and assistance they may be victorious over
 “ them. But if they shall desert thy ways, and therefore
 “ justly provoke thee to desert them, so that they be led
 “ into captivity by their enemies ; yet be thou so kind
 “ and merciful as to appear again for their deliverance
 “ upon their unfeigned repentance, reformation, and re-
 “ turning to thee and their duty.

“ Now in all these respects be thou gracious to hear and
 “ accept this people. For which end let this place be un-
 “ der thy special care : As an evidence of which, do thou
 “ now enter into this thy habitation among us, now that
 “ the ark, the symbol, and monument of thy presence and
 “ power is brought in, which we have therefore placed in
 “ the inmost and most excellent part of this structure.
 “ As a sign, therefore, of thy hearing and answering this
 “ our prayer, pour down, we beseech thee, a spirit of
 “ sanctification, zeal and joy, on all thy priests and peo-
 “ ple ; and let thy glory fill this whole house as a pledge
 “ of all this. Hear us, O our God, in all these things
 “ for thy mercy’s sake, that I thy anointed servant, the
 “ type of the true anointed one, may not be confounded
 “ nor thy promise to David my father fall short, any way
 “ of its due and full accomplishment.”

This brief account of Solomon’s prayer, and particular-
 ly that of our text, by way of paraphrase, may serve,
 hope, to let in our minds plainly enough into the sense and
 scope of these words, as to the general import of them.
 And though our text be indeed a kind of digression from
 the rest of the prayer, and comes in therefore by way of
 parenthesis here : Yet it is so natural a one, that it may

justly be looked upon as a very material part of this solemn address. For without this we might have looked upon it as defective in some sort; this being so expressive of the sense this wise man had of the wonderfulness of God's condescension to men in general, and to Israel and himself more specially and peculiarly. But it is now high time to put an end to this introductory part, and to proceed more immediately to consider our text.

THE DISCOURSE ITSELF.

AFTER all I have said to lay the foundation of our discourse, and to introduce our minds, into the right understanding of this text; I come now to raise the superstructure, by a more exact and particular inquiry into, and consideration of those things which are here proposed to our meditation. Therefore, having given you a general account of our text in the preceding paraphrase, I hope it will be easy to perceive that these words consist of three parts. For, in the first place, Solomon in this his exclamatory digression and parenthesis, falls into a kind of ecstatical rapture, by way of wonder, how it was possible or conceivable, that God should dwell with men on the earth. And then he proceeds, secondly, to give the reason of this his admiration, taken from the consideration of the divine immensity. Where he lays a founda-

tion also, as to the right conception of the way and manner of God's dwelling with men on earth; seeing, we must conceive of this agreeably to the immensity, and other infinite perfections of God. From both which considerations he proceeds, in the third place, to admire how the immense and infinite God could condescend or find it possible for him to dwell in the house which he had built. Wherein, notwithstanding he plainly supposeth it to be the duty of men to build convenient places for the service and worship of God, when God is so kind and condescending, as to declare his readiness and willingness to dwell with them, even here below.

So that from these three parts of the text, we are led to the consideration of as many doctrinal propositions, in which all that is material in the words is contained; which therefore, we are to consider accordingly, and which are these following. 1st, "That it is indeed a truth, but a most astonishing and wonderful one, that God doth dwell with men on the earth. 2dly, That the consideration of the divine immensity, as it is most wonderful in itself, so serves not only to raise our thoughts to admire that God should ever condescend to dwell with sinful men on earth, but also to rectify our apprehension how and in what manner God can be said to dwell with them, particularly in houses made with hands. 3dly, That how astonishing soever it may be, that God doth dwell with men upon earth, yet, seeing God is pleased to condescend so far as to do so for our good; all men ought to reckon themselves obliged to do what they can, both to build and maintain convenient places for his service and worship, to do besides what they are able, that God may dwell among them.

I. PROPOSITION.

"It is indeed a truth, but a most astonishing and wonderful one, that God doth dwell with men on the earth.

I cannot believe that ye can possibly doubt of this assertion, or think it needs any further proof than what has been said. But if any should desire more, I refer them to the consideration of their bible, both as to the historical, and the promissory, and prophetical part thereof.

For, if we consider the historical part, nothing is more plain than this, that God never deserted the earth, nor ever wanted a church and people to serve him there. Though the account we have of the Antediluvian world be short and obscure, yet we find that the knowledge and worship of God was kept up then, from Adam and Abel down to Noah and his sons. And Enoch was not the only person who walked and conversed with God then; though he was the only man, so far as we hear, that was privileged with being translated. And, after the flood, though idolatry and wickedness soon began to over-run the world; yet we find God took effectual care by the means of Noah, Shem, Abraham, and others, to keep up the memorial of himself. And though Abraham's family and posterity were peculiarly blest by God with his paternal care; yet the account of Job and his friends, lets us see that God dwelt in other places as well as with them. Nay, the apostle assures us, notwithstanding the peculiar privilege of the Israelites above the rest of the world, that God left not himself without witness among the poor Pagans, seeing he did them good, and gave them food and raiment and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness;". preaching to them by traditional

conveyances of truth, and by the dictates of their own reason, that God was, and that he was the rewarder of them that diligently sought him, and the punisher of the workers of iniquity. So that, if when they knew God, they did not worship him as God, the fault was their own. But, as for the Israelites, to them were committed the oracles of God. So, that if we run through the history of that nation, we may easily see what pains God took to keep up the knowledge of himself among them. He that reads the psalms of David, the proverbs of Solomon, the writings of the prophets, and after them the apocryphal ones, will sufficiently perceive that God still dwelt among them, and never deserted them altogether. And if, after all this, we descend to the most illustrious period, when Christ appeared, and the Gentile nations began to have the gospel-light dawn upon them, which the apostle calls the fulness of time; we cannot but perceive, that God did never totally abandon the world, even as to the true and saving knowledge of his truths; far less left off his government of it, as the supreme ruler thereof. For here it pleased God to draw the seemingly scattered lines of his former providences to a center; by conveying the various streams of the law of nature and improvements of reason, that had crept through the muddy regions of the world in various meanders, to this one great ocean of gospel revelation, into which he made them disembogue and empty themselves; and by which these, separated from the polluted streams that mixed with them before, as well as the greater and nobler river which run through Judea, came to be swallowed up,

And, as the historical part of the bible shews us that God has ever dwelt with men upon the earth; so the prophetic and promissory part assures us he will ever do so. His promises give us to know, that he will ever have a
generation

generation to seek and serve him, and that he will be with them, even unto the end of the world; and that whatever attempts are made to extirpate the church, yet the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. And the prophetic part furnishes us with a graphical and exact, though often enigmatical and figurative description of the church's trial and conflicts, success, and victories; so that, though sometimes it may seem to be cut off, yet it shall revive again; yea, when at last the city of God comes to be besieged and almost taken, it shall be not only preserved, but see its enemies totally cut off, even as Jerusalem was in Hezekiah's time; which therefore, may be looked upon as an emblem, if not type also, of the last destruction of the insulting enemies of the church of Christ.

And surely, if ever God dwelt with men on the earth, he has done it since the last spreading of the gospel. For though antichristianism did almost eclipse the truth for some ages before the Reformation, yet he never left his church without witnesses against these evils, until at length he spread the light of primitive Christianity through the world once more; so, that these two last centuries have, in my opinion, out-shone all former ages, excepting the first three, and have perhaps fallen short only of the first of these. And I know not that any nation was ever more happy in having the presence of God among them, than these three kingdoms have been, since they were blest with reformed Christianity. So that, if God was said to dwell among the Jews, under that dark and shadowy dispensation; we have just reason to reckon he does so among us, though in a more spiritual and less political manner, adapted to the nature and design of the New Testament economy. Have we not reason thus to judge of ourselves? We, I say, who have the oracles of God in our own language; who have the ordinances of God so purely dispensed;

fed; and the design and parts of the gospel-revelation so clearly discovered, so demonstrably proved, and so evidently vindicated; we, who have the offers of salvation so often and fervently made us; who have the blessings and privileges of the Christian religion so excellently described, and our duty and interest so pathetically and strongly urged and laid home to us? Besides all this, have we not seen God taking to himself his great power for our defence? Has not He rescued us from those miseries we had involved ourselves in within our own memory? And may we not see then, that in innumerable instances, He has acted as our King and Ruler, for our defence and security? Nay, notwithstanding our degeneracy, blessed be God that He has left us; yet many that have not bowed down to Baal, nor defiled their garments; in whom, therefore, we may conclude God dwells, making them living temples of the Holy Ghost? As the scripture tells us good men, in a spiritual sense, really are. So that we may, with a little reflection on the history of these nations, find all those particulars of Solomon's prayer, as I paraphrased them above, verified in our own case. For, as we did engage ourselves to God and our Saviour, upon our falling off from the Romish Babylon, when we reformed from thence; so we may observe God's government over us, to have been various, according to our behaviour towards him. When we were guilty of national apostasy, we have been punished by pestilence, fire, persecutions, and civil wars; but, upon our repentance, God has stood by us again, and delivered us from all these calamities, even, when perhaps there was, with many more of form than sincerity in it.

From all these things, therefore, I suppose it doth sufficiently appear, that what I have asserted in the proposition is certain and true. And therefore, I shall now proceed

ceed to consider this truth doctrinally, having premised already what is sufficient, I hope, to clear up the meaning of Solomon's words as to their literal sense, and thereby laid a foundation for our further meditations upon this great subject.

That God's dwelling with men upon earth, doth necessarily suppose his existence, is so very obvious, as hardly to need our observing or mentioning it here. For we can no more avoid this supposition, than forget that men, with whom he is said to dwell, are supposed to have a being. And, therefore, our Lord had just reason to tell the Sadducees, that he could not but wonder that they should own that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet look upon them as not existing; seeing it was not possible that God could be the God of the dead, who were incapable of communion with him. Whence, as he infers the resurrection of the patriarchs, so he as plainly supposeth their real existence, as to their souls in another state. Therefore I hope I need as little digress here to prove to this auditory, that God is, as I need spend time to demonstrate that we ourselves are real and not imaginary beings. For, I hope there are none here capable of that degeneracy, as to be more liable to atheism or scepticism this way, than the antient Pagans themselves were; among ^a the wisest of whom it was a matter of dispute, whether such a monster as a speculative atheist did ever really exist: For though some were called so, upon the account of their deriding the Pagan deities, or by reason of their loose expressions that way, or their dissolute lives; yet we read not of any that could be justly charged with this as their fixed sentiment. Therefore, even the great ^b champion of the Pyrrhonians

^a See Cicero de Nat. Deorum, Maxim. Tyr. Diff.

^b Sext. Empiricus adversus Mathem. Lib. 8. p. 319. A. B.

Pyrrhonians tells us, that Theodorus and Protagoras, Abderitanus, and others, denied only the existence of the demons, whom the Pagans worshipped as Gods, and that too in a doubtful way of speaking; for the words for which Protagoras was censured and reputed an atheist, had relation to the Pagan demons, or deified spirits, and were no more than these. I am able to determine nothing concerning the Gods, whether they do indeed exist, or, if they do, what they are; for many things deter me from meddling with this subject. And in this sense also it was only that Epicurus himself was an atheist. For, says the same author; Epicurus only denied God, as to the opinion that the common people have of him. Nay the author himself, after all his sceptical arguments, or rather sophisms on this head, does affirm, That all men agree in the common notion of God's being, though not in the same way and manner. Yea, he sticks not to say further, That the notion of the being of God ever was, and shall remain to eternity, seeing the things that are done do constantly declare this, and are a perpetual testimony of it.

The existence of God therefore being necessarily supposed here, we do immediately perceive that the thing which this assertion of God's dwelling with men, doth more immediately denote, or lead us up to, is, That God is capable of converse with men, and they capable of converse with him: For seeing dwelling is in order to communication and converse, without which the dwelling of one with another is unintelligible, as being a sound without any signification: And seeing, therefore, dwelling and converse is not conceivable in the notion thereof, otherwise than in a sense that denotes reciprocalness: Hence we are led unavoidably to conclude, that as God's dwelling among men supposeth his conversableness as to them; so also their conversableness, in relation to him. For it is plain.

plain, that the word dwelling, and to dwell one with another, is a phrase borrowed from the cohabitation of men here on earth, who live together in houses and cities, as sociable, as well as reasonable creatures. But as this word doth suppose mutual converse and communion between God and men; so we must remember that we are to conceive of it in a way decorous and congruous to the vastly different characters of the infinitely perfect and sovereign being, and such poor minute creatures as we are; that thus we may think of this in a rational and spiritual way, without allowing ourselves the liberty of any gross or vain imaginations of this glorious truth.

Now having seen what God's dwelling with men on the earth doth suppose, I come to consider our proposition more directly, by an inquiry into these two things therein exprest, *viz.* The truth itself asserted, That God doth indeed dwell with men on the earth; and the wonderfulness of his doing so.

As to the first of these, having already said enough to evince the certainty of it, I have now only this one thing further to consider, *viz.* How, and in what way we are to conceive of this. And here I must premise one thing, which will direct our thoughts and meditations upon this head; that though we are not to limit our discourse to the particular way of God's dwelling in the tabernacle and temple, with the Jews of old; but rather to the manner of his dwelling in the world, and in the church, and in good men now under the gospel, in order to adapt this truth to ourselves, for which I have already laid a sufficient foundation: Yet the general consideration of the manner of God's dwelling among the Israelites of old, must be the thing we are to make use of, in order to the regulation of our thoughts, in treating of this subject. Now nothing is more

more clear and agreed upon by all than this ; that God dwelt among the Jews, as king over his own subjects. And therefore we must conclude, that he does so in relation to men still, especially with respect to us Christians : For though the Jews were his subjects in a peculiar manner, so as no other people ever were ; yet we are now his subjects as really as they were : And if Christian nations are not the subjects of God in such a political sense as they ; yet still they are so in a more spiritual and refined sense. For if this were not, we could give no reason why the New Testament economy is so frequently and peculiarly called the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven, as we find it is. So that hence it is plain, that God's dwelling among men, (seeing he doth so as their king and supreme ruler), and his erecting his kingdom among them, and over them, must of necessity be looked upon as synonymous phrases, and of the same signification and import. And, therefore, as God's kingdom over men in the world is properly twofold, *viz.* the kingdom of his common providence, and the kingdom of his special providence, or of his grace ; so also God's dwelling with men upon the earth must be understood, either in a more general sense, with relation to his government over men as such, or in a peculiar and limited acceptation, denoting his governing Christians by the laws of the gospel, especially those that are truly such.

Therefore, first, God may be said to dwell with men on the earth, in as far as he rules them by the scepter of his ordinary providence : For, as the apostle tells the Athenians, he is not far from every one of us ; seeing in him all men live, and move, and have their being. All things do indeed subsist by God, and have their being in him as well as men. But yet seeing the title of king speaks a relation to persons, capable of a reasonable and moral government ;

government; it is very improper to call God's providence over inanimate, vegetative, and sensitive creatures, by the designation of a kingdom, (as some learned heathens thought it was also, to call God the father of such, seeing the title of father is more than that of creator), unless we consider these accidentally, in as far as they have some relation to men; and therefore I think some systems ought to be purged from such theological solecisms. But to return; God dwells in the world among men, as their king and sovereign, in as far as he rules men, and all things relating to them, by his universal providence. And this is managed and carried on in these three great steps, or by these three things.

1. By his protecting and caring for the race of men, and all the individuals of this vast family: Whence he condescends to allow of the character and title of being the preserver of men; for it is he that disposes of men, and provides for them, as he sees most convenient, over-ruling all their designs and actions, and all the events of these, and limiting them as to their several stations and services, so that nothing falls out without his direction. But, though natural causes work necessarily, and sensitive creatures move by sense or instinct, and reasonable and free agents act voluntarily, and many things fall out to us casually; yet all these are under the conduct of a wise and ready providence, and made use of to subserve the great design of the world, in carrying on his noble purposes; for he ruleth by his power for ever, and his eyes behold the nations; and under this his kingdom, as even the heathens acknowledged, all things are.

2. God evidenceth his dwelling thus among men as king, and carries on this universal kingdom, by giving men laws. For whatever way God takes to promulgate his will in the world, whether by innate ideas, or by sensation

tion and reflection; yet still it is evident, that mankind generally have agreed in the belief of the being of a God, and acknowledged an essential difference between virtue and vice, and lived in the expectation of future rewards and punishments. So that the gentiles, as the apostle says, who had not the law, did yet attain by nature to do the things written in the law, their own reason becoming this way a law to them. Whence it came to pass, that their consciences accused or excused them, according as they acted agreeably to these principles, or otherwise. For what may be known of God, was manifest in them, God having shewed it unto them. For the Apostle sticks not to say, that they did clearly see the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, by the things which he had made. Whence he shews how unreasonably they did act, when they ran into idolatry and wickedness: For, surely a right improvement of the above-mentioned principles, would have led them into a quite contrary practice. And of this we have instances in many of the heathen moralists, particularly of the stoical sect, who from hence arrived at a very high and elevated pitch of knowledge and practice both; though the latter bare no exact proportion to the former in the best of them. However this is certain, that as the Jews are to be judged according to the Mosaical law, and Christians according to the gospel: So Heathens are only accountable to God for the improvement of their reason, where they had no opportunities to understand the import of revelation as the apostle assures us. And therefore,

3. This makes a third particular, wherein this kingdom of God consisteth, *viz.* "his judging men, and rendering unto them according to their acting, in congruity with or opposition to this law." For mens reason cannot infer any thing more certain from the natural principles I name

ed before, than that which God proposed to Cain of old :
 " If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted ? but if
 thou dost evil, sin lieth at the door. For if we allow God
 to be powerful, just and merciful, we must conclude that
 he will act agreeably to these attributes in his governing
 and judging men. And therefore the psalmist speaks ex-
 cellently, when he says : " power belongeth unto God,
 and mercy also, O Lord : for thou dost render to every
 man according to his work. "

But *2dly*, God's kingdom is taken in a more peculiar and
 limited sense, for his kingdom of grace, or special provi-
 dence over his church and people. And in this sense most
 frequently, if not constantly, are the phrases of the king-
 dom of God, and kingdom of heaven to be understood,
 when they occur to us in the New Testament. For by
 these and the like expressions, the gospel economy and erec-
 tion is to be understood. When, therefore, John the Bap-
 tist came to usher in this new dispensation, by preparing
 men for the reception thereof, he says ; repent, for the king-
 dom of heaven is at hand. And in like manner Christ
 himself begins his ministry with the same expression,
 preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand ; or
 the kingdom of God, as another Evangelist calls it : of
 which he gives this account. After that John was put in
 prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of
 the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and
 the kingdom of God is at hand ; repent ye, and believe the
 gospel. And because our Lord Jesus is the great admi-
 nistrator of this kingdom, therefore, it is called, by a special-
 ly, the kingdom of the Son of God, And elsewhere these
 expressions are joined, and this kingdom is called the king-
 dom both of Christ and of God : because Christ acts in all
 things relating to this kingdom as the great delegate of
 his father ; upon which account it is said, that Christ is now

gone to heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him. For this kingdom of God, which John and Christ preached as near at hand, was not fully erected until Christ's ascension, nay speaking properly, not until Christianity had triumphed over Judaism in the everſion of that constitution. For ſo our Lord himſelf doth expreſſly determine this matter, when ſpeaking of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and Judæa, he attributes this to his acting as king and general of his people againſt his enemies the Jews, though he made uſe of the Pagan Romans to do the execution. So that when he ſays, that then men ſhould ſee the ſon of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory: we muſt not imagine that he intended to ſay, that they ſhould ſee him with bodily eyes, but mentally; as beholding Jeruſalem compaſſed about with the Roman armies, and deſtroyed by them, as he had predicted and threatened. From whence it was eaſy to conclude, that it was Chriſt that ſent them on that errand, (as even Titus himſelf owned, if we may believe an enemy), ſeeing he tells us that theſe were the times of his vengeance, that all things might be fulfilled which are written. Now that this was the firſt conſpicuous triumph of Chriſtianity over its firſt enemies the Jews, is expreſſly told us by our Saviour, when he tells his diſciples, that when theſe things ſhould begin to come to paſs, they were to look up and liſt up their heads, becauſe their redemption did thus draw nigh. And what he means by redemption here, is plain from what follows. When, therefore, ſays he, ye ſee theſe things come to paſs, know ye that the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand. And this leads in our minds to underſtand our Lord's meaning in many other places: As particularly in his answer to the Pharifees, when they demanded to know when the kingdom of God ſhould come. For, ſays our

Lord

Lord, the kingdom of God comes not with outward shew, pomp or pageantry, (as Emperors and Kings do, when they come with great state and glory, attended by their servants and guards, and received with acclamations and all expressions of joy by their subjects.) Neither shall they see this kingdom by such visible marks, as to be able to say, lo here it is, or lo there ye see it. For behold, the kingdom of God is among you already, and yet ye perceive it not. But that the more full erection of this was to be after Christ's sufferings, he himself assures us, in what follows. "As the lightning shineth from one part under Heaven to the other; so shall the son of man be in this day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation, &c.

Now this gospel-kingdom takes in three things, chiefly, viz. the grand charter or law thereof, its subjects, and effects: and all these go under the name of the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. 1. The gospel itself, or the new-testament revelation of things is called by this name; as it contains the offer of salvation, requires faith and repentance as the terms of obtaining it, encourageth us to do so by many and gracious promises of blessings purchased and to be enjoyed, and directs us how to live by many excellent precepts enjoined us, and rules set before us. This gospel revelation I say is called the kingdom of God, as being the grand charter and law of it, and consequently the great instrument by which our Lord and Sovereign rules and governs us christians. In this sense certainly we must understand our Saviour, when he threatens the Jews, that because of their infidelity and wickedness, the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given to others that should receive it more readily, and improve it better. By which we are given to understand that the Jewish Theocracy should come to an end, because of their rejecting

Christ; and that this should not, properly speaking, be destroyed, but removed from them to the gentiles; where it should be erected under a new name, and in another and more spiritual manner be exerted and put forth. Thus the great charter of Christ's kingdom comes to be called by the name thereof: and we see this accomplished, now that the gospel which was first offered to the Jews is come unto us. But elsewhere the gospel goes under the proper name and designation of the law of Christ; as in other places it is called the law of the spirit of life in Christ; Jesus, and the law of faith, and the royal law. 2. By the kingdom of God in the new testament we are sometimes to understand the subjects of it, both ~~real~~ and nominal. For the visible church, or the external constitution thereof in the world, comprehends both these, and is made up of them. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a net cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind. Though at last there is a vast difference made between true and counterfeit subjects, as appears by the sequel of the same parable. And to the same purpose are the other parables in the same chapter calculated, *viz.* that of the sower, and that of the seed and tares. 3. The Gospel economy is called the kingdom of God, not only in relation to its revelation, and subjects, but with reference also to its happy effects in the world, especially to those that do truly subject themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are told, that the kingdom of God standeth not in meat or drink, or any external thing properly, but in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the heavenly angels sung this song of joy at the nativity of Christ; with relation to his kingdom, that he was to bring glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men.

Now from the consideration of these three things, it is easy to observe; that the government of God over the church mediately, and of Christ immediately, is justly called the kingdom of God; seeing it is according to this divine charter and law, over such subjects, and in order to reach those happy effects. Whence we see how God doth dwell in his church, and among his people, now since the erection of Christianity.

But because true Christians are only the subjects of Christ, with whom he dwells, in a most peculiar and special sense; therefore it is fit we consider this more directly and distinctly. I did indeed take some notice of this in the introductory considerations: where I cursorily made mention of our Saviour's promise to good men, "that his father and he would come and make their abode with them; whence he is said to stand at the door of our hearts, knocking there, in order to be admitted; and upon which account, when he is admitted, he is said to dwell in the hearts of true Christians. But I am now to consider more particularly, wherein this consists. Now there are three things wherein God and Christ's dwelling in the hearts of true Christians doth stand, and which his kingdom in the souls of the faints, and over their persons doth denote and import, 1. His taking possession of their souls by the inlightening and sanctifying influences and operations of his holy spirit; delivering them thus from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of his dear son; whence they become the true subjects of this glorious king of faints. Thus they that were sometimes darkness, are made light in the Lord, in order to walk as children of the light; the fruit of the spirit being in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. And from hence, They are directed and assisted to "walk as children of the light, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, exercising

exercising themselves always to have a conscience void of offence, both toward God, and toward men. So that their outward walk, as well as their inward frame, is conformed to the law and institution of Jesus Christ; shining thus as lights in the dark world, in order to the conviction of the same, and for the honour of their great master and holy profession. Now such persons are, 3. privileged further by the divine protection against all enemies, visible and invisible. Therefore, as "every proud imagination, and high thought or passion in them, is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and as they are strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness." So at last all their enemies shall be destroyed from before them, and they shall be glorified as overcomers, with power over the nations of their adversaries, being honoured with being set down at Christ's throne, even as he overcame and is set down with his father on his throne.

From all this which I have said, I suppose we cannot but see how God doth dwell among men now upon the earth, by the erection of Christianity therein. He hath anointed his Christ upon his holy hill of Sion, and given him dominion over the nations, to rule in the midst of his enemies. And our blessed Lord has taken to him his great power, and has reigned: and the crown shall ever flourish upon his head; in spite of all that hell and a wicked world can do. So that, though he may be provoked by particular nations to remove his dwelling from among them, and take their candlestick away, as was the case of the Jews: Yet he has assured us, that he will never totally desert the earth, but continue a church in it as long as men continue upon it; and that he will be with his servants to the end of time: so that the shout of a king shall ever be heard among

among them. And there are, therefore, three properties peculiar to this kingdom, which deserve our consideration.

The first is, That it is a spiritual kingdom, not modelled and constituted as earthly monarchies are. This our Lord tells us of, in that noble testimony he gave to the truth before Pontius Pilate, that his kingdom was not of this world. But, 2. Though it be a spiritual kingdom, yet it is a powerful and strong one, above all that are in the world, able to break to pieces all that oppose it and stand in its way. Thus it is represented to us by Daniel, under the emblem of a stone, cut out of the mountains without hands; which yet increased to such a prodigious bigness and strength, as to fill the whole world, and break all the monarchies of it to pieces. And to the same purpose our blessed Saviour compares it to a mustard-seed growing up into a tree; and to a little bit of leaven that leavened insensibly, yet strongly, three measures of meal. The third property of this kingdom is, that it is everlasting, and not of a temporary and short duration as earthly kingdoms are. For the kingdom of Christ is said to be "an eternal one, which shall never pass away nor be destroyed; and that, therefore, the saints under him shall take and possess this kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." For, though as to the present economy of things in the world, Christ's kingdom must end, when he delivers up an account of it to the father at the last day: yet as to the essentials of it, it is certain he must reign for ever; and that of his kingdom there shall be no end.

And now I have finished what I had to say unto the first inquiry, "How and in what way we are to conceive of God's dwelling on the earth, both in a more general sense with respect to mankind, and in a more special one with relation to the church, particularly real and true Christians.

Christians. By all which, as I have sufficiently proved the truth of the thing, so I hope I have guarded against all mean notions of it on the one side, and wild fancies on the other. So that having given the true scriptural account of it, I presume to say, that it is easy, after this to form a satisfactory and intelligible idea of it in our minds. And, therefore, it is time now to proceed to the next head, which will no less require some close application of thought.

Let us therefore, now, *2dly*, consider the wonderfulness of God's dwelling with men upon earth. For seeing dwelling supposeth agreement and converse, there is just reason that all men, as well as Solomon, should admire how the great god can come down so low as this earth, not only to govern it, but to inhabit there (as it were) and to dwell with men upon it, as a king with his subjects, or a father with his children.

And, therefore, I must now consider what is the substratum or foundation of this converse between these parties, or what it is in them that lays a foundation for such a coalescing and agreement, considering the infiniteness of the one, and the limitedness of the other. But while I propose this, and seem to start a difficulty against it, I find that this very thing that seems to make against this converse, doth indeed make for it, and is the very foundation of it. For the infinity and plenitude of God renders him equally capable to converse with men, as to make or govern them; that I say not also, that his government of men, which is moral and in the way of reason, is inconceivable without something of this. I confess the limitedness of man seems exceedingly to militate against this notion, for we will be apt to cry out. But how is it possible that such finite and limited beings should conceive of God, or be capable of converse with him? But, besides, that

man

man is not so confined in his thoughts, but that he can apprehend something of the divine excellencies, nor in his will and affections, but that he can aspire after immortal bliss, and pursue it according to the best of his understanding: I say, besides all this on man's part, if we consider God rightly, we shall find a solution of this doubt, seeing the infiniteness of God is certainly sufficient to supply all our defects, as we are creatures, and so finite beings: For surely it is as easy to conceive of God's conversing with men, as it is of his creating all things of old, and governing them since: So that if we consider man in relation to his bare natural capacity, as he is the workmanship of God, abstracting from the consideration of his adventitious defects, as he is now in a lapsed state; we are necessarily led to believe the verity of God's converse with him. And, therefore, though it was the effect of God's mere goodwill, that he made our first parents reasonable creatures; yet after he made them such, it was not possible that he should wholly exclude them from his converse whilst they continued obedient: For if God should have done so, it must have been either from a defect of power or goodness. To suppose either of which is equally absurd as blasphemous; for an impotent or wicked God is as great a contradiction to reason, as horrid and devilish in the expression of it. Therefore supposing the plenitude of power and goodness of God, that the idea of him does necessarily involve, we must immediately conclude, That as God is able to condescend so far as to have communion with us, and allow and capacitate us for conversing with him; so he is no less actually communicative of himself to those that love and serve him, seeing his tender mercies are over all his works.

But if his reasonable creatures, who because they are such, must also be allowed to be free agents, do proceed so far

far, as to cast off his fear, and abandon his service, refusing to love or obey him any more ; then I readily confess a foundation is laid this way, for God's refusing to converse any more with them ; for in this case the supreme majesty may justly be expected so far to abandon such wretches, as either to annihilate them, or continue them eternally shut out from his presence, and under the severest torments that he can inflict, or they endure, without being extirpated. As therefore it was disobedience in our first parents, that broke off all that fellowship that was between God and them before ; so it is the same cause that produceth the same effect still among men. From all which it is easy to see, that God's converse with an innocent reasonable creature, and his abandoning of a rebellious and treacherous one, are equally deducible as natural and necessary effects from the above-named causes.

That therefore God should converse with innocent and holy creatures, and dwell among them, when he has made them such as the angels in heaven are now, and as Adam once was, is no matter of admiration at all, as is vulgarly and too often asserted. So far am I from this opinion, if I may call it one, that I should admire indeed, if God should abandon those that never were guilty of disobedience to him. Which yet I do not say, as if the worth and merit of an innocent creature were the proper foundation of this ; for it is the nature of God himself, to whom it is as essential to be good as great, that I do found this intirely upon : For I must declare that I firmly believe, that the discrimination between that which we call moral good and evil, ariseth from the nature of God, antecedently to the consideration of his will ; for I am no more certain that God is, than I am of this, that he must will, as well as act, according to his nature and essential perfections.

But this I confess, as I hinted before, is matter of the highest wonder and admiration to me, that God should make such creatures as angels and men are. For though he must love them, being made and continuing innocent; yet seeing he stood in need of no adventitious or external service or praise, being infinitely happy in himself; it was merely from his free will, in a way of condescension, that he was pleased to give origin to any such. But this I must add here, by way of caution, that though God must love and communicate himself to holy and sinless creatures; yet he is not tied to do so, as to equal degrees. If all be happy, they have surely enough; and God may act in other respects, as he shall see best. It is indeed a matter too high for us to enquire into at this distance, whether in the various degrees of the glory of the angels above, God has not in the different formation of them laid any foundation for his communicating himself to some more than others. And, therefore, I chuse to speak in the general, as I said but just now; that seeing God will desert none of them, and consequently makes them all equally happy in the essentials of blifs and glory, we have reason to leave him to act in additional circumstances, as his wisdom sees fittest to be done. I know indeed that some, whom I cannot but look upon as both learned and good men, do hold the contrary opinion, that God may desert an innocent and sinless creature; and may therefore quarrel with me for holding the negative. But that there may be no logomachy between us, about the word desertion here; I do declare, that I do understand by it, not every thing that may come under that name, but such a desertion as denotes an utter withdrawing of strength, and withholding of assistance from the creature, so as to render him altogether incapable any longer to resist temptation, and thereby necessitates his sinning. Which whosoever holds,

holds, and can free God from being the real cause and author of sinning, will do more than I am capable of conceiving. Though at the same time I shall be very far from charging any person with this consequent, as his opinion. For I have long ago learned to impute nothing to any man as his sentiment, but what he owns as such in express words; seeing what I may think is a necessary inference from a thing, may not be such to him. But to return; I do confess it was not possible for God, speaking in a moral sense, to make a reasonable creature otherwise than in a mutable state, so as he might sin if he pleased, because otherwise he had neither been a free agent, nor in a state of trial. But this is so far from patronizing the former opinion, that it quite destroys it. For if God necessitated the fall of angels and the first parents of mankind, then were they, in that case, necessary and not free agents. And if so, I must say a bold word, that they were not, nor indeed could be, as so circumstanced, capable of disobedience, no more than the wind and lightning are in the mischiefs they do. Nor will the metaphysical notion of the essence of the wills standing in a spontaneity, and not in indifference, ward off the force of this, though it were never so true; seeing that which necessitates the will to act so, must be the cause of the action, and of the soul's acting thus spontaneously likewise.

But we must leave the consideration of man as innocent and consider him as sinful, in order to see the wonderfulness of this truth, that God condescendeth to dwell with men upon earth. This no doubt Solomon had in his thoughts in this short and abrupt expression. For it is hardly possible that any person can consider this truth, of God's dwelling with men on the earth, but he must reflect more or less explicitly on the qualifications, if I may so call them, of the different parties that are supposed to dwell

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together. And, therefore, as the thoughts of God's greatness and our meanness are equally natural on this occasion; so likewise is the consideration of God's purity and our vileness; of his kindness and our treachery and disobedience.

Now seeing it is inconceivable that two enemies can chuse to dwell, live, walk, and converse together as friends, unless they be agreed and made such; hence we must necessarily conclude, that God's dwelling among men upon the earth, doth suppose that he and they are reconciled and made friends again. Nay it will follow further from hence, that according to the degree of reconciliation that is between them, the degree also of their converse and communion must be. Therefore as reconciliation in the general is supposed in all the communication there is between God and lapsed creatures; so, an outward and federal reconciliation lays the foundation of external communion with God; which was the case of the Jewish nation of old, and of Christian communities now; and an inward and spiritual reconciliation lays the foundation also of an internal and divine converse with him. So that we must now enquire whence it comes to pass, that God doth so far condescend to men, as to be willing to dwell with them upon the earth.

And here reason would entirely fail us, if revelation did not help us out. For that God is merciful, could never answer the difficulty, or assure us that he must thus be gracious to us; seeing, we must consider him also as just and faithful to his word. And who could ever adjust the measures God must keep in his actions, so as justice and mercy should equally compose his providence in relation to lapsed men? So, that unless the sacred scriptures did clear up this matter, we should ever have remained

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pendulous between hope and fear, uncertain how our Maker would dispose of us; either in acting according to his mercy, because we were his creatures, or according to what we had deserved, as being rebellious subjects. Nay, without this light, we might be led even into despair, by considering God as the supreme rector of the world, and our offence, therefore, not as a mere debt, but a crime even of the highest nature, as being the worst sort of treason. So, that we might have just reason to apprehend, that God was so obliged to punish us, that it was not possible for him to dispense with his own law, as being to our apprehension, not the law of his free-will properly, but the law of his own nature.

How endlessly then might we run out into such speculations, upon this great and mysterious head, if the holy oracles of God did not clear up the matter to us, when they represent God as obliged to punish us, unless satisfaction be given to his justice for the violation of his law; whilst at the same time, they discover Christ offering himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for sinners, in order thus to endure what should be esteemed and accepted as equivalent to our suffering for ever? This, and God's accepting of it, solves all our difficulties, and dispels all our fears especially, when we see this actually accomplished in the incarnation, sufferings, and resurrection of our Lord. And without this, it had not been possible for God even to have dwelt with men upon earth, who are at best but sinful dust and ashes, as the scripture phrase is.

This therefore being supposed, may it not be probable that Solomon doth speak here obliquely at least, with some reference to Christ's incarnation? Should we confine the inspired writings, as we do human ones, there would be no room left, I confess, for any conjecture of this kind.

But this were as unreasonable, as it would be to confine the understanding of God to the same limited way of thinking by successive ideas, by which the human intellect is bounded. And therefore, the Hebrew doctors of old, as we see in the practice of Christ and his apostles afterwards, did interpret scriptures after another manner than has been done since. Of this innumerable examples might be given; but one or two may suffice at this time. He that reads the words of David; "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger;" I say, he that reads these words, might, I suppose, be apt to think that David did only insinuate here, that it was no unusual method with God to defeat mighty designs by very small instruments; and that he tacitly has relation in particular to God's defeating Goliath, and, by consequence, the whole army of the Philistines by his hands, when he was, as it were, a poor child not known or regarded before. But our Lord applies this passage quite another way, when he interprets it as a prophecy of the acclamations and Hosannas, with which the common people accompanied him into Jerusalem. And again, in the same psalm, David tells us, "That when he considered the heavens, and the glorious luminaries thereof, he could not but wonder that God made such account of so poor a creature as man; adding, That he had dignified him, by making him a little lower than the angels, and by putting all other creatures here below under his feet." The first or literal sense of which, I suppose, is too clear to need any proof. And yet without any regard to this, the apostle applies it altogether to Christ, and that by way of interpretation, and not of a bare accommodation; as I believe any person

will think that reads his words: "Christ must reign," says he, "till he hath put all his enemies under his feet; for he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who put all things under him." And elsewhere the apostle applies this passage the same way, when he says, "That God hath raised Christ far above all principalities and powers, both in this world and that to come; having put all things under his feet, &c." But the apostle comments upon this passage yet more fully, when he says; "God hath not put the world to come, of which we speak, under the dominion of angels. But one in a certain place testified, saying, what is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of Man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou hast put all things under his feet. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with honour and glory, &c." Nay, which is yet as wonderful, several expressions of the nineteenth psalm, which every one would think do plainly relate to the works of nature, (by which men may see and apprehend the being and power of God), are interpreted of the apostles and their preaching in the world; when he says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, for their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. And therefore many Christian expositors, after Justin Martyr, understand Christ to be meant by the sun that is said there to go out of his chambers as a bridegroom. Nay, several Jewish Rabbies have interpreted the same expression as prophetic of their Messiah. And therefore, I think we have reason not to despise

despise this interpretation, especially, when we may justly suppose that Malachi alludes to that expression of the psalmist, when he speaks of Christ under the title of Sun of Righteousness.

Now, if man's dominion over the creature, and the works of creation, be interpreted as typical of Christ, have we not at least equal reason to suppose that God's dwelling in the material temple of old, was typical also of Christ's taking upon him our nature, and of his dwelling thus bodily among us? And surely he that reads the epistle to the Hebrews, where the temple, the mercy-seat, and ark, and in a word, all that liturgy, and even economy, are interpreted as typical of Christ; I say, he that reads and considers this, will not think it strange that we interpret this place with a reference to Christ's incarnation. But besides all this, I would have it considered, that our blessed Lord himself doth plainly suppose this, when he calls his body by the designation of a temple; saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." Now, that our Saviour speaketh this, in relation to the temple's being a type of his body, or human nature, is not only plain from the words themselves, but also from the occasion of his speaking them, the place where, and the persons to whom he spoke them; for these words were uttered by him, immediately after his driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, to the Jews that were witnesses of that action, when he was yet in it, or in the court before it. In relation to all these circumstances, he sees fit to let them know that the Shekinah that dwelt in their temple, had now taken up its perpetual residence in him; and that therefore, though they should kill him, he would raise up the temple of his body in three days afterwards. And therefore, the apostle

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John speaks in this dialect, when he says that the Logos, or the ancient Memra and Sheckina that dwelt in the temple, was made flesh, i. e. assumed a human body and nature, and therein dwelt among men, who beheld his glory, viz. resident in that body as in a temple, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. So that the human nature of Christ is that now to Christians, which the temple was of old to the Jews. For, as that was the only place of God's public and special residence, towards which the Israelites were to pray, in which all sacrifices were to be offered up, where God was to be consulted, and where God gave forth his edicts, and where he returned answers to men, and in a word, manifested both his presence and will; so, when the fulness of time came, when the antitype of this holy place appeared in the world, the temple was deserted by this glorious inhabitant, who left it to animate and dwell in a body: "For it pleased God that in him all fulness should dwell, even all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

So that we have no temporal Jerusalem, temple, or ark more. For heaven is the first of these, and Christ the latter to us. "The temple of God is now opened in heaven, in which is seen the ark of his testament. And we are not now under the New Testament, called to journey up to, or pray towards any earthly city or temple. "But we are come to the heavenly Zion, and celestial Jerusalem, to join in with the innumerable armies of angels, in worshipping God the judge of all; and all this through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, whose blood speaks good things unto us. For there our blessed Saviour remains as our priest, making continual intercession for us; where he offers up in that golden censer, the prayers of all saints; which being perfumed with the in-

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cence of his own merits, go up as a sweet odour before God." By all which, it appears that Christ is the only medium through which God comes down in mercies and blessings to us, and through which we ascend in petitions and prayers to him. In which sense he is the only center of the converse and communication there is between God and men. And therefore, he is our only temple under the gospel. So that they that would prove their cathedral worship from the temple, seem to forget both what the Jewish dispensation was, and the Christian is. For the temple was the only earthly cathedral ever God authorized. And those who have attempted to rebuild this under a new name, and have aped that ancient, but now vacated worship, as the papists have done for many ages past, had need to consider how disagreeable this is to the design of Christ's coming into the world, and the nature of the gospel, and what mischief such impositions have done to Christianity.

But to return; why may we not suppose, after what I have said, that Solomon had some eye to Christ's incarnation, in the words of our text? "For if Abraham saw Christ's day long before; and if Jacob, Moses, and others before, saw this also by faith, and died in the expectation of the coming of the Messiah;" why should we think that this was hid from Solomon, especially upon such a solemn occasion, that had such a typical relation to Christ's coming in the flesh as we have seen? But if this should not be allowed me, yet surely none can justly deny but that the Spirit of God did so influence Solomon in this his inspired prayer, as to make these words drop from him as relative to Christ, whether he actually thought of him or not at this time. For let us but abstract from the apostle's character and authority, and there will

will appear much more ground for my explaining these words in reference to Christ, than there can be supposed to be for interpreting the above-cited passages of the psalms after this manner. For, as it is sure God had never dwelt among men, but upon the account of Christ's assuming our nature; so we know, and might make it apparent to all, (were this a place for it), that the Old Testament saints did all expect the visible appearance of the Messiah. For is it not upon this account that Christ tells his apostles, "That many kings and prophets had desired to see and hear the things they did," who were debarred from obtaining that privilege?

But supposing there were indeed nothing that could be so much as a probable ground for our explaining this phrase, of God's dwelling with men on the earth, in a relation to Christ's assuming our nature, and appearing in the world, that he might dwell with men, as one of themselves, in order to be the better capacitated to govern us; I say, supposing there were indeed no foundation for my explaining my text this way; yet, considering that this is the foundation of God's dwelling with men, and of all the communications and converse between him and them, as being the only way to the Father, and he that hath revealed him to us, and in whose name we can only be saved; I say, considering all these things, I had good reason to take notice of this, in discoursing of this subject.

And now having seen how justly we may admire, that God should dwell with sinful men on the earth, and lay such an astonishing foundation for his doing so, I might expatiate here upon the wonderfulness of the divine love, and the various instances of it. How astonishing is it to think that the supreme wisdom or logos of God, who was from eternity the Father's delight, and his Father like-

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wife his, should take pleasure in the habitable places of this earth, and have his delights also with the lapsed sons of Adam? That he should pass by the fallen angels, and take upon him the nature of man, exalting it thus relatively above the angelical, by an union with himself; in order thus to render us capable of converse with God, and to be himself a medium through which God might converse with us; how wonderful a thing is it? seeing, besides the performance itself, no less than a spiritual marriage-relation between God and us doth result, when we found upon this foundation, and approach to God this way. So that the scripture gives us ground to call this dwelling of God, by the name of cohabitation, in a divine sense, in as far as God tells his people, that "he is married unto them, and that their Maker, this way, is become their husband, and they betrothed unto God as his wife, in righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness, tender mercies, and faithfulness. In which respects the apostle tells Christians, that they were to look upon themselves "as married to Christ, and espoused to him for that end, as a chaste virgin, in order to dwell and cohabit with him, in holiness and purity here, and in glory and bliss hereafter. And besides all these things, I might shew the wonderfulness of God's love, not only in giving us Christ, but with him all other things. That he hath made such great and precious promises to us, that we might come to partake of a divine nature, and that he hath sent the Spirit to guide us in this world, and to assist us in our adventures to heaven, that we may be successful in them; these, I say, afford new and constant matter of wonder, how God should condescend to be at all this pains, in order to render us fit for communion with himself both now and for ever.

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But these things being so frequently mentioned in popular and ordinary sermons, and so largely and pathetically handled in a great many practical discourses, I am not willing to spend any more time this way here. And therefore, leaving these hints to be further stretched out by your own meditations, I shall say no more now of this subject, but pass on to the next proposition. Only I cannot forbear hear to cry out with the psalmist; "Lord! what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him, or the Son of man that thou makest such account of him? O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!"

II. PROPOSITION.

The consideration of the immensity of God, as it is most wonderful in itself; so it serves not only to raise our thoughts to admire that God should ever condescend to dwell with men on earth; but also to rectify our apprehension how and in what manner God can be said to dwell with them, particularly in houses made with hands.

Besides all I have already said, as to the wonderfulness of God's dwelling with sinful men on earth, the consideration of the divine immensity lays a new foundation of admiration this way. Not that it is any wonder that an infinite God should communicate himself to finite creatures when they are either innocent or reconciled; but that he should do it in such a way as to assume the character of the king of a little tribe of men, and act among them

such, which was the case of the Jews, when he was Lord of the universe, nay immense as well as every where present; for the first of these denotes more than the latter, as we shall presently see.

Now, as it is plain that Solomon had his eyes fixed upon the divine immensity, when he cries out, behold heaven, yea the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, O our God and King: So it is no less perspicuous, that this part of his exclamation is added as the reason of his precedent astonishment, at the thoughts of God's dwelling with men on the earth. And if we do also consider the same words with relation to the last clause of our text, which is by way of inference from both the former parts, and where he says; how then can God dwell in this house which I have built? It will be no less plain to us than either of the former, that he does not only speak these last words by way of admiration, but doth also suggest to our thoughts, how we are to judge of God's dwelling in the temple, and consequently in any place where his ordinances are purely dispensed; seeing the consideration of God's immensity is sufficient to banish all carnal and gross ideas of this truth from our minds.

And therefore, we are led in here to think of God's immensity in itself, and then to consider it in relation both to the precedent and subsequent truth. And accordingly we have now a threefold inquiry before us.

- I. How we are to conceive of God's immensity.
- II. What reason this doth afford us for admiring the condescension of God, in dwelling with men on the earth.
- III. How we ought to improve this, in regulating our conceptions as to the manner of God's dwelling with

with men here below, particularly in houses made with hands.

1. Therefore we are led to consider the divine infinity, as to the conception we ought to have of this attribute.

But, though this naturally falls in my way here to be considered, I must confess I am exceedingly at a loss what to say on so dark a subject. For what can a finite mind apprehend of infinity? Even Solomon's capacious soul was far too narrow to grasp the full notion of it, and therefore, he chose here rather to believe and admire it, than attempt to define or explain it. And surely, then I might justly be excused, if I should copy after so great an example; for, though many have written on this subject yet I must confess I never yet received any full satisfaction this way from any. And neither am I so vain as to think I am capable to add any thing considerable to the labours of learned men this way. Yet seeing God allows us to think, as we can, of his glorious attributes, and bears with our imperfect notions of them, when we are honest, sincere, and humble in our thoughts and expressions; I hope, if I venture to say something on this head which may perhaps be satisfactory to ordinary capacities I shall not incur any severe censure from the more learned and judicious, especially, seeing I am obliged to be very short and succinct in what I have to offer at this time.

We cannot conceive, my friends, of any real being, but we must suppose it exists at some time, and in some place. For to say a thing doth really and actually exist, and yet that it doth not exist now, or that it exists no where, is as plain a contradiction as I think any man can be guilty of. Let therefore some philosophers dispute about the nature

of spirit and body as long as they please, and let them deny that spirits occupy any place, or that they are any where, because not extended as bodies are; yet still it is plain, that if a being exist no where, it exists not at all; for I defy any man to form an idea of any substance, of whatever kind, without a relation to place, as well as duration. And therefore, to deny that spiritual substances are any where, because they do not occupy place in the same way that bodies do, is an odd way of reasoning; for our reasoning will force us to believe that a spirit, though it do not fill a place as a body does, yet still is in a place, though in a way peculiar to itself. For, if it were not in a place, it could not act in one; for can that thing act any where which itself is no where? Seeing in this case, if my soul be a spirit, and yet not in my body no more than in the body of a tree, it is no more possible to conceive that it should enliven and actuate my body, than a tree or any other thing. We must not, therefore, deny a thing, because we are not able to form an idea of the modus of it, or how it is. For at this rate, we must deny the very being of a spirit; seeing we have no other idea of it but a negative one, which is indeed in plain English no idea at all; notwithstanding the bold pretences of some men to as clear a perception of it as of matter. We do indeed know a spirit, as well as we do a body, as to its acts and operations; (as we know the effects of the air, as well as of the fire and water, which yet we see not as we do these); but what the substratum of these operations is, which we call the essence of it, we have no notion of. And therefore, there can be nothing more silly, than to tell us that cogitation or volition is the very essence of the soul; for at the same rate, any man may assert that the essence of the water is fluidness, and that of the earth fixedness.

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But to leave school-quibbles, we must remember, that as we can only conceive of spirit, in contradistinction to body; so we can only conceive of God's infinity and immensity in contradistinction to the limitedness of other beings. As therefore we exist in time, or have our duration limited: So seeing we must conceive of God as infinite, we must suppose him to be so, with relation to duration, in which respect we call him eternal, by which we mean that he ever was and must ever be. In like manner, seeing all creatures exist somewhere, in a limited sense, by occupying some part of space: therefore we must conceive of God, as being every where, or occupying all space. Now seeing all space is an expression that relates either to the creature in general, or to the creator: and seeing all things created, how vastly and inconceivably soever extended, are and must be finite, and consequently the place they occupy be so too: Hence our thoughts must suggest to ourselves immense and unlimited spaces, (which the schools call imaginary very improperly, seeing we are forced to believe them really existing), lest otherwise we should conceive of God as limited or confined, and no better than some *Anima Mundi*, some soul informing or acting the world, and no more: Which, though it was the sentiment of some of the learned Heathens, yet is not, I am sure, the divinity either of the old or new testament. But to return, such spaces, I say, we must suppose, unless we will allow, either that the created world is, in a proper sense, infinitely extended, or that God is equally confined and limited, as to space, as the world is. Therefore, though such spaces infinitely extended, abstractly considered, may seem a mere chimera; yet we are forced to suppose them, or otherwise we must run into one of these absurdities I have mentioned: For we are to remember that infinite space is to be looked upon as the relation that God bears to place; even as eternity is the relation

relation he bears to duration. So that unless we will deny the latter of these, we cannot justly explode the former. We must therefore conceive of infinite space, not so much in relation to finite beings, by which it is unoccupied, as in relation to the infinite being, to whom it is as essential to exist every where, as it is for limited beings to exist somewhere. Even as the notion of eternity has only a negative relation to time-lived creatures; but **is** the proper attribute of the infinite God. Therefore, there can be nothing more unaccountable than to tell us that God is present nowhere in regard of his essence, though everywhere as to his power. For this I cannot but look upon as a contradiction; which infinite or immense space, in the sense I have mentioned, cannot justly be supposed to be: For there is no more contradiction in saying that space, in relation to God there existing, is infinite, though unoccupied by corporeal beings, than there is in asserting that God is infinite as to place, or immense; these being indeed but synonymous expressions. But to say, that the attribute of a being no where existing, does exist any where, yea every where, is what I confess my poor thoughts can never apprehend so much as the possibility of. And therefore I think it much more eligible in such cases to admit of difficulties, though too hard to be distinctly explained, when they involve no contradiction that I can foresee, than to run into notions that do at once choke reason, and represent God dishonourably to us, to say no worse. And therefore seeing one essential discrimination of God from the world, or system of created beings, is his immensity; which denotes more than his presence with all the creation, which is properly his ubiquity: I must believe it, though I cannot fully comprehend the way or modus of it.

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But seeing we must think of this glorious attribute in a way suitable to his nature, we must not allow our thoughts to form any conception thereof in a way unworthy of him. And therefore we must not suffer our imagination to become the rule of our intellect in this matter, by fancying God to be infinitely extended, as if he were a fine and tenuous body ; which is altogether repugnant to the nature of an infinitely pure spirit. But we must check the exuberancy and exorbitancy of our phantasy, by making a close and exact judgement of this spiritual contemplation, abstracted from all corporeal ideas, and say as St Austin does somewhere ; great is our God, but without quantity or magnitude, and therefore immense because without these.

Let not therefore any man rashly condemn this supposition, that God exists not only in all space, where creatures are, but beyond the limits of all created beings. For not only Solomon here, in the words of our text, but the scripture almost every where else, (where God's existence with relation to space or place is spoken of), doth constantly assert the same thing ; when it tells us that God is not, neither can be confined within the circle of the outmost heavens. But if any will, after all has been said, ridicule this, let me ask them, whether they believe the world to be, in a proper sense, eternal or not. If they say they do, I must not run out into a digression here, to refute so absurd an opinion which so many have irrefragably refuted, and which, therefore, is now universally exploded. But, if they allow the world to be made by God as a first cause : I then ask them Where God was before he made it ? for since I have proved it to be absurd and a contradiction to exist, and yet exist no where ; we must grant, that before the world was made, and consequently before created space (as it is usually

usually called, though I think very improperly, seeing it is but an accident or relation) God must have existed in infinite space, if he existed at all, seeing immensity is his necessary and essential attribute. So that to deny infinite or immense space, is to deny the infinity and immensity of God; and to deny these is to deny his being.

But to leave the dispute of the divine immensity, as it denotes his existence in all supposable space; I hope at least all persons will allow his Ubiquity, or his presence in all the parts of the world. For though the *modus*, or way wherein he is every where present, be indeed inscrutable, seeing we can never search out the Almighty to perfection: yet the thing itself is as certain as that God is. And therefore, we must say with Job, that God is before us and behind us, and every where round about us; though we perceive him not. For as God created all things, so he sustains and governs all things also as he pleaseth, by which he gives us constant proofs of his power and Godhead. His eyes run to and fro through the earth, as the scripture speaks, to shew himself mighty in defence of his friends, and against his enemies. And yet we are not to imagine that his knowledge is further extended, this way, than his essence. For he is not a God only at a distance, but at hand and near us also. Therefore we must allow of the Psalmist's reasoning, and say with him, "Where shall we go from thy presence O Lord? for whether we go to heaven or hell, or the extremities or center of the world, still there thou art, and therefore there thou canst easily find us out."

And therefore, after all these speculations, let us conclude this part of our discourse with the excellent words of the heathen moralist. "Let us live so, as to remember we are under the inspection of God; and let us think so, as to consider God sees what is within the closet of

our breast. For what signifies it, to hide ourselves from men, when nothing is secret to God? for he insinuates himself into our minds, and exists even in the midst of our thoughts.

And now having adventured to give some account of the divine immensity; I must desire not only your, but God's pardon, as to what may be weak or defective in it, as in all other parts of this discourse. And considering both the greatness and niceness of this subject, the rectification of my mistakes, if there be any, will be the most grateful service any man can do to one; who, next to the ambition of being better, is above all things desirous to be wiser and more knowing in such matters.

In the mean time, 2dly, I proceed to inquire, "What ground this consideration of the divine immensity doth afford us, for admiring God's condescension in dwelling with men on the earth?"

And as to this I need only say, as I have already hinted, that besides what I observed under the former proposition, the consideration of God's immensity doth exceedingly greaten his condescension, in dwelling with lapsed Men on the earth, as all must acknowledge if they do but allow themselves seriously to consider of this matter.

For what obligation was there upon the infinitely glorious God to seek the welfare of such wretches as we are, after so base a defection from him? Had he destroyed the whole race of man, and cut them off in Adam their source and original, what loss could he have sustained, who needed not any thing adventitious from his worthless creatures?

Or if, to shew his goodness, he was willing to evidence his communicableness to creatures, in taking pleasure in the homage they paid him; were there not millions of an-

gels

gels more capable to serve him than we ; one of whom is able to destroy worlds of such worms as we are ?

And what do we know, but the planetary worlds are replenished with creatures of as noble a frame as we are, who never sinned as Adam and his posterity have done ; or, if they did, are under vastly different economies from what we are ? Surely we are no more able to comprehend God's works to perfection, than we can comprehend God himself. And, therefore, seeing he hath adapted the scriptures to our present capacity, as he did the old dispensation to the genius and circumstances of the Jews : We cannot argue from the silence of scripture that more worlds are not, no more than we can infer from Moses his taking no notice of the laws of other nations, that therefore they were under none. Nay, what if our sun be but one of the stars that illuminates seven, and perhaps many more, planetary worlds ; as the other stars or suns, which may be more in number by many millions than we imagine, may also enlighten and cherish more or fewer worlds in their several vortex's. Surely there is nothing in revelation to disprove such suppositions ; for those that draw arguments against these and the like speculations, from some popular and familiar expressions of scripture, seem neither to be acquainted with the figures of the Jewish and oriental phraseology, nor indeed with the proprieties of our own language, every expression of which will not allow of a rigid literal sense ; as E. G. when we say, all the world knows such or such a thing. For should any explain Christ's promise in this rigid sense, that the gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto **all** nations, before the destruction of Jerusalem : I suppose ~~he~~ would never be able to make good such an interpretation. And yet in like manner did the apostle speak, when he tells us, that in his time the gospel was preached in all the world, and to every creature

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creature under the heaven. But I suppose no body will infer from thence, that America was discovered in the apostles time; and far less that by creature we are to understand vegetative and sensitive, as well as reasonable creatures, because the general import of the word includes all these. And yet these, and the like expressions, may more justly be interpreted after this manner, than the silence of scripture can be made use of as a proof that this terraqueous globe of ours is the only world that is peopled with reasonable beings; for the assertion of any thing does certainly conclude as to the falsity of the opposite negation. But silence in a matter can never be a proof, that the supposition of that thing which it takes no notice of must needs be false; for how strange were it for one that reads the history of England, to deny there were any such places as China and Japan, because he finds no mention perhaps, made of them through the whole book.

But, supposing this little globe of ours were the only one peopled with reasonable creatures, yet still we can find no other reason, than that of God's mercy, why he should submit to dwell with men on the earth, considering their wickedness and obstinacy. Might not he have justly destroyed our race long before now for our sins, and raised up a new one from the dust, as he had done ours before? Was not this as easy to him, as to have erased the several tribes of Israel, and raised from Moses another and more powerful nation in their stead, with which he threatned the Jews once? Or could he not have turned stones into reasonable creatures if he had pleased, as our Saviour tells us he was able to do?

Nay, can we possibly conceive, that the infinitely glorious God did set eternal limits to his own power, when he made this little world of ours, so as never to make any more? Certainly I should think I were guilty of most un-

worthy

worthy thoughts of an infinitely wise, as well as powerful being, should I allow myself such a liberty. If then it be not so much as supposable, that God should be restricted to this our world : We have just reason to conclude, that he that made it, and all the vast creation besides, could soon have made new worlds, inhabited by creatures of the like frame we are of, or of a nobler one, though he had utterly destroyed ours ; for had he but said the word, it had been immediately done ; and had he commanded it to be so, it had infallibly stood fast.

And, therefore, from all these considerations it appears to be most wonderful, that the Almighty God should condescend so far to his rebellious subjects, as not only to suffer them to live, but to be willing to come down, as it were, and dwell with them here below ; especially if we call to mind the way wherein he is pleased to do so, according to what I mentioned under the former proposition. I shall not therefore add any thing further on this head, but shall proceed immediately to the next head, which, from what I have already said, will need, I hope, but little illustration ; for from hence it will easily appear,

3dly, How we ought to improve the consideration of God's immensity, in order to regulate our conceptions as to the manner of God's dwelling with men upon earth, particularly in houses made with hands.

For, after what I have said as to this matter, I hope none of us can have so gross a conception of the immense and infinitely perfect God, as to imagine, that God can dwell with men on the earth, in such a sense as men are said to do one with another. And, therefore, God's dwelling in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, is only expressive of this, that these were places set apart by men for the solemn worship of God, according to that ancient dispensation, and consequently places where God was pleased

pleased to give solemn answers to his people, and signs of his caring for, and protection over them. This Solomon intimates in the following part of our text, when he acknowledgeth that the house he had built could never be supposed to include or contain God. And that this was his sense, appears yet more plainly in his letter to Hiram, when he speaks after this manner. But now when I talk to thee of building God a house, thou canst not imagine that I should be guilty of such an absurdity, as to suppose that any can build him a house so as to contain or confine him, or that thus, in a literal sense, he should dwell therein; seeing even the heaven itself cannot be supposed to do so. I am not so foolish, as to imagine any thing so ridiculous as this. No, no, all I pretend to is, to build a house to worship him in, and to offer sacrifices unto him. And to the same purpose does God himself speak, in his answer to Solomon's prayer; I have heard, says he, thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. For which end I have chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever. And, therefore, I assure thee, that my eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.

And, therefore, God's being said to dwell in houses made with hands now under the gospel, is only expressive of this; that God will be present in the assemblies of his people, so as to concur with his ordinances there dispensed, as he shall see fit.

For if what I have said was all the holiness of the temple of Jerusalem, which was so peculiarly privileged above all other places as the house of God's residence, we may easily infer from hence, in what sense our churches now, as we call them, can be supposed to be holy. And surely God himself doth sufficiently determine this controversy, when he doth so expressly distinguish between the relative

holiness

holiness of temples, and the real holiness of persons. The heaven, says he, is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where then is the place that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all these things are of my hand made. But to this man will I look, that is poor and of a contrite heart, and trembleth at my word. And, therefore, the apostle tells us, that God cannot be said properly to dwell in temples made with hands.

Shall we therefore be so foolish as to confine the immense and infinite God to houses of our own building? when even Solomon declares against it here. Or can we be so unreasonable as to imagine that God did not dwell among men before that time, during the whole course of three thousand years, that had elapsed from the creation to that period? Doth not God himself tell David, that it was to comply with his honest, though weak, apprehensions of things, that he was induced to suffer any house to be built for him? Go, says he to Nathan, and tell my servant David thus; shalt thou build me a house to dwell in? Whereas, thou knowest, I have dwelt in no house since the time I brought my people out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and tabernacle. In all the places, or in all the times, as it may be as well supplied, wherein I have walked with the children of Israel, spake I any word to any of the tribes, or rather judges and rulers of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel; saying, why don't ye build me a house of cedar? When, therefore, the Israelites are commanded to keep God's sabbaths, and reverence his sanctuary; the sense is plainly this: That they were to worship God solemnly upon the sabbaths, and in the sanctuary. So that it were ridiculous to conclude from hence, as some have done for the real holiness of churches, that there was a sanctity in such times and places, abstractly considered, without

without relation to their design and institution, or super-added to them, over and above the relation they have to God and his service. Though I do readily grant, that there is much more reason to be given for some peculiar holiness in the Sabbath-day, as it is the seventh part of our time, than to any place of worship, especially now under the New Testament, seeing this is enjoined by a peculiar command in the decalogue.

Now seeing, by all this, we see that the Jews never attributed more than a relative holiness to their temple, in the sense I have mentioned, and therefore were never so foolish as to fill it with any images of the ineffigable God, far less with the pictures or statues of angels or men; for those of the cherubims, as well as those of the palm-trees, were only emblems or hieroglyphics, or otherwise we must have very monstrous ideas of things; have we not just reason to wonder, that any that call themselves Christians, should under a more spiritual dispensation run back into Pagan customs, though christened with other names. For not only the Christian and Jewish institutions did never allow of image-worship; but even the wiser heathens disapproved it, and therefore commended the Mosaical law for forbidding it, as we may observe in Strabo, Dion Cassius and others. And had it not been for the fear of an ignorant and bigotted rabble, hounded on by their sordid priests; no doubt we had heard of many elaborate discourses from many of them against that unreasonable way of worship.

But I shall not insist further on this head, seeing, I hope by this time, we apprehend not only how the consideration of God's immensity tends to raise our admiration of God's condescending to dwell with men on the earth; but how improvable this is also, to regulate our apprehensions, as to God's dwelling with men on the earth, and particularly

ly in places set apart for his worship. And, therefore, I shall proceed now to the third and last proposition from these words.

III. PROPOSITION.

How astonishing soever it be, that God doth dwell with men upon the earth; yet seeing God is pleased to condescend to do so, for our advantage: All men ought to reckon themselves obliged, both to build and maintain convenient places for his service and worship; and to do what else they can, that God may dwell among them.

Having already shewed how astonishing it is, that God should dwell with men on the earth, and how great a condescension it is in him to do so; I am now, in the last place, to consider these two things, which are proposed to our meditation in this proposition. The *1st* is, that all men are obliged to build and maintain, as they are able, convenient places for the worship of God. And, *2^d*, That they are likewise obliged to do what they can, that God may continue to dwell among them, and that they may consequently receive the benefit of this privilege.

Therefore, *1st*, Let us consider the obligations all men are under, to build convenient places for the worship of God, when they are wanted, and to maintain them as they are able.

But here I am in doubt, whether I need do more for the proof of this, than barely to propose it. For if it be a duty to keep up the public worship of God in the world; when it is self-evident that we ought to have convenient places to perform this service in; that thus we may with

ease and convenience pay our acknowledgments to our God, and serve him with chearfulness.

Let religion be looked upon, by our modern infidels and debauchees, as nothing else but sham and priestcraft, and let them scoff as much as they please at the serious and devout profession of it, as cant and hypocrisy; yet I hope all of us here look upon it as the most weighty and momentous thing in the whole world. If, therefore, we think so, let us act as those that are in earnest about it, and let us do what we can to promote it among men. For without this, as I have proved elsewhere, no human society can long stand or subsist. To which purpose a learned heathen tells us, that he believes a city may be sooner built without a foundation, than the society that dwells there can be supposed to coalesce and subsist without the notion of religion.

If this then was the sentiment of the heathens, and accordingly they were at such cost and charge to erect temples to their demons and senseless deities, with the greatest state and magnificence; shall not we shew equal zeal, at least, for promoting and maintaining the necessary worship of the only living and true God?

For though I confess our God is not delighted with gaudy pomp and pageantry, with which a certain sort of men, who have lost the spiritual way of performing divine service, would fain patch up their lifeless devotion; yet, seeing the moral law is in force, though the ceremonial be not, and consequently, synagogues ought to be built, though not temples; therefore, sure I am, all Christians will agree that the worship of God ought to be kept up in the world, however they may differ as to the form and mode of it. And therefore, we cannot but assert the truth of this part of our proposition; that it is the duty of all men to contribute what they can towards

the building and maintaining of convenient places for divine worship when they are wanted. For we are but trustees of the temporal good things we enjoy ; and are equally obliged in reason, (though not by so positive a precept,) to set apart some part (and the scripture seems to insinuate the tenths) of our estates for the service of God, as we are required to dedicate the seventh part of our time to his worship. And if so, we must consequently reckon it our duty to assist those that labour in the word and doctrine. For the apostle tells us, there was the same reason under the gospel, to maintain Christ's ministers, as there was of old for the priests " living by the altar, as well as serving at the altar ; for, if ye be made partakers of their spiritual good things, ought not they also to partake of your temporal good things ?"

And truly, if we consider these things aright, it is no less our interest than our duty to do so. For we are ever to be mindful of doing good and communicating, seeing God declares such services to be well pleasing to him. Nay we are told, that they that do so, do lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. Their Mammon or worldly things, (which are too often used as well as acquired, so as to deserve the character of unrighteous Mammon), tends to their eternal advantage when thus improved ; going up before God for a memorial, as the alms and prayers of Cornelius did. And as such good works are acceptable to God, so they are also amiable in the eyes of men, and procure to them lasting and solid renown. In all which respects, such benefactors of mankind have the encouragement that their righteousness shall not be done away ; when they act in these things, from right principles, and for the honour of God, and the good of men. Nay, as in all these respects good works, especially of this kind, are profitable to men ; so

may such persons expect even temporal blessings on this account. Therefore, Solomon adviseth us "to honour the Lord with our substance, and the first fruits of our increase, as the way to procure the blessing of God upon us, and his adding further to our store.

And how can we be looked upon as grateful to God for his many mercies, if we refuse to serve him with what is his gift to us, when he calls for our doing so? Shall we grudge him a little of his own? Or reckon all is lost that we bestow on Christ, and lay out for the promoting of his honour and worship, and the good of souls?

Is it not matter of satisfaction to think, that we are capable thus to serve God, and throw in our mite into his sanctuary, especially when we consider that even the least service done to Christ and the church from an honest heart, shall not lose its reward? When ye are cast upon a death-bed, my friends, and are to leave this world and all its enjoyments, I dare say none of you will ever have a sorrowful reflection, for your having laid out something in order to promote religion, and the worship of God. Nay, when ye shall stand before the tribunal of Christ, I may justly suppose that your having this way sincerely designed the good of souls, will be no less matter of satisfaction and joy to you, than your cloathing the bodies, and supplying the temporal wants of the poor; which yet our Saviour assures us will be one of the greatest evidences of mens grace and obedience then. Nay, let me suppose further, that God may be pleased to bless the studies and endeavours of so poor an instrument as I am, to the edification and salvation of the souls of any, who may resort to this place upon the account of the conveniency thereof; I say, let me suppose this, and then ye may assure yourselves, that ye have reason to look upon this performance, as that which has given occasion to this eternal good of souls.

souls; and consequently, that ye have a share in it, as joint instruments in this work. And will not this then afford matter of joy to yourselves, and praise to God in heaven for ever?

Let me add one thing yet further on this head; that, as ye are obliged thus to maintain and promote the worship of God, in point of duty, interest, and gratitude, and as that which will administer comfort to you living, dying, and for ever; so ye ought to reckon it the highest honour God can put upon you in this world, that he capacitates you to do so. For if it be the highest condescension in God, as I have shewed at large, to suffer us to converse with him; it is so likewise to allow us to build and maintain houses convenient for this purpose. Therefore, that God put it into your hearts to design this work, and that he hath enabled you to perfect it for so good an end, as the further advancement and propagation of the gospel; I say, all this is an honour put upon you, and matter therefore of thanksgiving to God by you. And therefore, I think we ought to remember and apply what David said on a memorable occasion of this kind formerly: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the victory, and the majesty. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all. Who then am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come off thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers and sojourners as all our Fathers were. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own."

Now what reason have we upon all these accounts, to thank God that we have liberty and opportunity to meet together in such a place for worshipping our great and

gracious God? Let us look abroad, and consider the case of our poor persecuted brethren in France, Hungary, the Palatinate, and other places; and then let us think what they would give for our liberty and privileges. Were we in the stead of those faithful martyrs in the gallsies, I am sure we would reckon ourselves happy to have the opportunity to hear the word of God, though we had no better seat than on the threshold or floor, or even at the feet of the meanest of you. Therefore, I hope none of you will dispute about places, as remembering that our blessed master washed his disciples feet; to teach them that there was no precedency, excepting that of the lowest humility and most universal serviceableness, to take place among his followers. And that therefore, ye will all follow the apostolical command, "to esteem each other in all lowliness of mind, better than yourselves."

I shall therefore leave this head, which the present occasion has brought me upon, and proceed to a momentous and useful consideration; which is the second point proposed to consider from this proposition. I pray you therefore to remember, that besides the duty we are under building convenient places for God's worship, and maintaining them when built.

We are in the second place, obliged to all we can, that God may indeed dwell among us, and that we may receive the benefit of so invaluable a privilege.

There are, therefore, two things further to be minded by us; 1st, That we are obliged to do all we can, that God may continue to dwell among us; and, 2d, That we ought to be exceedingly concerned to receive the benefit and advantages of so invaluable a privilege.

For to what purpose are we at pains and expence to build and maintain convenient places for the worship of God, if it be not that God may dwell among us, and

be provoked to remove the gospel from among us? And to what purpose is our concern for this, if we ourselves receive no real advantage this way?

Therefore, 1st, We are to remember that it is certainly our duty, and ought to be our concern to have God continue to dwell among us.

We are not to look upon ourselves as members of a congregation only, but of a city and nation also, nay, of the world in general, and of the Catholic church therein. And therefore, our concern should be to promote religion, with respect to a public good, contending thus earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to be ever kept by them.

And here I cannot but take occasion publicly to thank God that he hath directed and assisted me to act so, as neither to know father nor mother, country nor party, in the things of God. And as I speak this without any vanity that I am conscious of, so I believe ye will bear me witness, and all others where I have been, that I have ever carried it, as one that had no other design than to promote Catholic Christianity. Let some contend for parties and factions, and let the ignorance of others damn us for heretics, or their uncharitableness censure us as Schismatics; we have, I hope, learned not to render evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but rather to pity their ignorance, where a mistaken zeal influenceth them, or to pray for their conversion, where love of power or money sways them.

Let it be our great ambition to exceed one another, and all men in holiness and humility, "Let us study to love God with all our heart and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. Let us be concerned to believe in God and Jesus Christ, to life eternal. Let us found on this sure foundation of the prophets and apostles. And let us
mind

mind to practise and live that holy religion, which is first pure, and next peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of good works, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; that thus our light may shine so before men, that it may prove influential, through the divine blessing, to induce them to glorify our Father which is in heaven." Let us act thus, my friends, and then we need not value what men can say of us, or do unto us; for then if enemies rail, we shall render them blessing for cursing, and good words and deeds for hard speeches and ill usage. Let others then place their religion in the tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, in garments and gesticulations, or in such like trifles; Our business, I hope, shall be to place ours in something else. Nay, let some boast of an uninterrupted succession, of their popes and prelates, mediately from Christ and his apostles, but immediately from antichrist and his dignitaries; we shall not envy them the whim of the first, no more than the glory of the second. Let it be our concern to mind the grand essentials of our holy religion as far as possibly we can; and let us leave to others the honour of pleasing themselves with the supposed decency of their forms, and the necessity of imposing them.

And if we must be shut out on such pretences from outward communion with some, whom otherwise we esteem, we shall have this satisfaction, that none can exclude us from spiritual communion with our God and Saviour, by which we have communion with all saints also, of what denomination soever they be, as we are members of the same body, and therefore have all that communion that separation and distance of place will allow us. Nay this way, as we have one faith, one baptism, one Saviour, and one hope; we have also union with all real Christians whether they will or not; though our different senti-

ments

ments and forms, or rather the imposing them be a barrier to external uniformity between them and us.

But alas, it is not differences of this kind in lesser matters that threaten us most with the removal of God's converse with us, and abode among us; but it is malice and envy, censure and calumny, pride and luxury, covetousness and over-reaching, cursing and blasphemy, lying and perjury, and in a word, ungodliness and profaneness. Therefore, if we would have God to dwell among us, we must do what we can to pray down and drive down all those evils. It is thus we are to act in our several stations, that we may be public blessings in the places where we live, and to the nations we are concerned chiefly with. And surely we ought more than ever to be diligent in ourselves this way in our several stations, when we see the sad decay of the Protestant interest abroad in profession, as well as here and every where in practice. For, besides that, the Protestant interest has not at this time much more than half that extent of people and territory it had acquired in sixty years after Luther's appearance, as might easily be demonstrated.

However, if we are not able to stem the impetuous stream of wickedness that appears with so threatening aspect, yet at least we shall have this satisfaction, that we have attempted to honour God, and promote the public peace and welfare. But I shall not run out further upon this subject at this time, but shall proceed to the next head, viz to shew,

2. That we ought to be exceedingly concerned rightly to improve this invaluable privilege of God's dwelling among us, for our own benefit and advantage.

If private persons should reckon, that what I have been saying does no way concern them, because they can pretend to little or no interest, power or opportunity, by which a public good must be promoted; yet no man can have

have any colour of excuse as to this matter, so as to think himself exempted from diligence and care, with respect to his own particular advantage, seeing we must all give an account of ourselves to God.

Shall our great sovereign come down to us, and, as it were, knock at our doors, saying, open to me, and I will come in and dwell and converse with you; and shall we refuse so glorious, so kind, and so advantageous an offer? Can we be guilty of such wickedness and folly at once, as to say in our hearts, to our great king and benefactor, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? Or can we arrive at such a pitch of demonism, as to give no other return to God for all his mercies and promises, than to declare and proclaim, in life and conversation, that we are of the principle of an antient proud tyrant, who said, who is the Almighty, that I should serve or obey him?

If there are such monsters in the world, let us be concerned for the honour of God, and the salvation of our own souls, and strive who shall be most zealous and assiduous for the promoting and carrying on of such excellent ends. How divinely do some heathens speak on this head, as if they were inspired from above: And shall we fall short of them who profess ourselves to be the scholars of Christ? O, how dreadful will your condemnation be above what others can possibly fall under, if after all the pains God takes upon us, and the innumerable favours we receive from him, we continue disobedient to his will, and enemies to his interest in the world? So that interest as well as duty ought to teach us to seek after such a blessing as converse with God, by a careful improvement of the privilege of God's dwelling among us.

And for this end, let us allow our thoughts to look back and take a serious review of what God has done for

us, in relation to our being thus privileged, in order to our present and eternal felicity. How wonderful was it, that God should preach a Saviour to apostate Adam immediately after the fall? and that instead of fulfilling the threatning, in its utmost extent, by annihilation or eternal punishments, he should only sentence men to a temporal death, unless their own sins should draw down further miseries? How kind was he to reveal to men, how and in what way they were to worship God, as well as to discover his readiness to reward the sincere, though imperfect endeavours and performances of his servants this way? And how admirable and inconceivably wonderful was the love of God in saving us by the death and sufferings of his own son? Let us consider these things, and withal, what a noble and sweet erection that of Christianity is; the advantage we have, as to the age and place we live in, where we see the gospel set in so clear a light, and are allowed to worship God according to our consciences, without fear or distraction: And then surely we cannot enough admire the distinguishing expressions of the love of God we are under; especially if we descend to particulars, and consider how many calls of the gospel are made to us, and how Christ and salvation are prest upon us; how often, and how clearly the scriptures are explained to us, and our duty and interest discovered; how stately we enjoy the gospel-ordinances; and how by all these ways God is pleased to knock at the door of our hearts, and call us into converse with himself, and to the experimental views and sensations of religion; for surely, if we consider these things, we cannot but conclude ourselves obliged, in all respects, to improve this great privilege of God's dwelling among us.

Nay, these considerations are not only of use to inforce and engage us to our duty this way, but are of equal service

vice in directing us how we may attain to converse with God, and receive real and abiding advantage by his dwelling with us on the earth. And, therefore, it will deserve our most serious thoughts, to consider this subject a little more nearly and closely.

For seeing communion with God has been much talked of, and yet I am afraid but little understood, it may not perhaps be amiss to consider it here as distinctly as our little remaining time will suffer us. And I am the rather induced to consider this subject now, because, as some are not ashamed to ridicule it; and with it all the spiritual and most noble part of practical religion; so others have spoken of this in such a way, as to render it not only unintelligible to all, but even ridiculous to critical judgments.

Let it therefore be considered here, by way of preliminary, that it is sin only that hath created that distance and alienation there is between God and men; and that it hath effected this, both by rendering us guilty creatures, and thereby the objects of the divine displeasure, and obnoxious to punishments from him; and by depraving and polluting our souls, and producing evil habits and dispositions there, from whence irregular desires and actions do proceed. For it is easy to see, that God cannot converse with guilty and rebellious creatures, nor communicate himself to corrupted spirits, while they continue so; seeing there can be no agreement between light and darkness, nor any fellowship between the temple of God and idols.

Now while a man is thus alienated from God, he is full of distrust of God, and fearful apprehensions of him. He walks in darkness, and is therefore full of distraction. So that it is no wonder to see such a man terrified by the ghastly appearances of wrath and misery; by which he must needs be haunted, upon the account of sin, and the

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apprehensions of its tendency and consequents, unless he be altogether lethargical and stupid, a state more deplorable and hopeless, than even that of despair itself.

But when the guilt of sin is pardoned, and the impure heart cleansed, then is our case happily altered upon the sudden. Then do the shadows of the lowering and dusky evening take their flight, and the chearful morning dawns upon us, with the charming smiles of the divine rays that flow from the sun of righteousness, perfumed with the refreshing breath, and cordial breezes of heavenly zephyrs, being ushered in with the melodious songs of the celestial choristers: For then God doth discover himself to the soul in the most amiable and ravishing manner, representing Christ in the attractive wonders of his love and kindness to us. So that we are made to think, that we see our heavenly Father and blessed Saviour with smiles in his eyes, love hanging on his lips, and his bowels rolling towards us with compassions and tender mercies. These things captivate the soul, and make it fall in love with its Lord and master, so as intirely to devote itself to his service: For God is love, and therefore he that is swallowed up by the considerations and influences of this love, must needs dwell in God, and have God dwelling in him. And though we cannot see God or Christ by bodily eyes; yet faith supplies that defect, by enabling us to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

Then it is that fear and melancholy take their flight from us, and suffer us quietly and calmly to approach the presence of our God with confidence and comfort; for by the powerful constraint of faith, working by love, we are led into converse and familiarity with our God. From whence it is that a man attains to the truest and sweetest assurance of his salvation and interest in God, seeing this way he sees his title and claim to heaven fully cleared up.

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For should a man hear even a voice from the superior glory, giving him the assurance of his compleat and final salvation, yet it would fall vastly short, both of the strength of evidence, and degree of pleasure a Christian receives from the close view and distinct sight of the real and internal impressions, according to scripture-evidence, of the divine nature's being, as it were drawn forth and copied over upon his own soul. And as this was the sentiment of Peter, so I am persuaded it must be self-evident to all considering persons. For is it possible to conceive any thing that can assure and certify us more of our getting to glory, than to see heaven already wrought within us in the first lineaments, as well as only ground-work of it?

These things therefore being thus premised, I hope it will be no difficult thing to give a satisfying account of communion with God to those that have their interior senses (as the apostle speaks) spiritually exercised to discern spiritual things. For, as for carnal minds, it will be impossible for them to discern and understand rightly what I mean by this; since sin and lust continue to blind their minds and stupify their consciences. If therefore such persons apprehend not what I am about to say, let them remember it is the defect of the subject, even their own minds, and not the unintelligibleness of the object that occasions this. However I shall endeavour to give as plain an account of this matter, even to them, as the nature of the thing, and my weak understanding will allow me, especially considering the time also I am limited to.

There are two ways of converse among men here on earth, and there are no more supposable, *viz.* distant converse; by letters, books, tokens, or messages, from one to another; and immediate converse by discourse or signs. And in a proportion to these, there are two ways also, in a spiritual sense, of converse between God and holy souls.

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The first of these is managed and carried on, by the intervention of God's word and works, especially the first. For what are these but two great and excellent volumes, full of deep and profound matter for speculation and observation?

As therefore a man sends his thoughts and desires to his friends, wrapt up in the paper conveyance of letters and books, by which he speaks to their minds through their eyes: So God speaks and preacheth to the minds of thinking creatures, by his works and dispensations, but especially by his word. For what is the bible, but as it were a letter dictated by the holy spirit to proper amanuenses and scribes, and directed to us; by which he speaks to us, even to this day, as really as if we heard him speaking with an articulate voice from heaven? And this way he is pleased to suggest such things to his sincere followers, as good men have not only ever thought it their duty to take notice of, but have had reason also to look upon often as the secret whispers of their God, conveyed to them by his spirit through the medium of his word. Though weak and foolish persons have frequently, I confess, taken their own fancies upon this pretence, for inspirations. A great argument how cautious we ought to be in such matters. But to proceed.

As this way God is pleased to converse with us; so we are called to converse with him also by meditation and prayer. For what is meditation in this case, but our reading over God's letters and writings with serious thought and attention? And what else is prayer then, but our returning answers to what God writes to us about, by imparting to him the knowledge of our minds and determinations, and by imploring his favour and assistance, according as our wants are, and by rendering thanks to him for the mercies we have received from him? &c.

But besides this, there is, *2dly*, another sort of converse between God and holy souls ; which answers in some sort, to that which comes under that name here among men. For, though this doth more directly relate to the future state, where we shall see, as we are seen, and know, as we are known ; and converse with God as it were, face to face : Yet we may justly and with confidence say, both from the assurances of scripture, and the experience of all truly devout and holy persons ; that there is something of this kind attainable here on earth, which is known to the saints, and spoken of by them, under the notion of heavenly and divine sensation. Did not the apostle John mean this, when he assures us, that the saints had their fellowship with God and Christ ? And did not the apostle Paul insinuate this, when he tells us, that the conversation of Christians in his days was in heaven ? Surely they cannot be supposed to speak, in these and such like places of miraculous attainments, but of that which all Christians were obliged to aspire after. And I am sure more must be meant by them, than a bare outward profession of religion and unblamableness of life.

I do therefore appeal here to all serious Christians that make conscience of prayer and strict walking before God ; whether they have not felt their souls sometimes brought near, as it were to God, elevated above the world ; melted down into unusual contrition ; seized with the utmost abhorrence of sin ; inflamed with the love of God, and emboldened to pour out their complaints unto God : And whether they have not, now and then, found their minds enlarged, and their mouths filled with arguments in wrestling and pleading with God in prayer ; their gratitude for mercies received increased ; their zealous resolutions for closer walking with God and further serviceableness, with a divine plerophory renewed ; their joy and comfort in be-

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believing made more sensible and great than before; their former sorrows and fears dispelled; their title to heaven further cleared up; their view of that glory more furbished and brightened; their sins more clearly discovered to be pardoned; and their former prayers more remarkably and satisfactorily answered. I say, I appeal to all serious and holy persons, if they have not, at sometimes at least, more or less, found some of these, or the like Christian attainments, as certainly and undeniably, as they have, at other times, been conscious of the changes of their minds, from fear to hope, and from sorrow to joy, upon the alteration of their outward circumstances in the world for the better.

I do not speak here of extraordinary communications, such as the apostles and prophets had of old. For I own these are now ceased. Though I must say, that though these cannot be expected now; yet God has never said, that he will reveal himself thus no more. Nay, if we may believe unquestionable relations, God has done so sometimes, long since the cessation of extraordinary and miraculous gifts. But I speak here only of those things which we may attain unto, according to the promises made to all Christians, if we be not wanting to ourselves. For, as Christ says, "if any man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him: and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Let some men therefore, scoff at all this as cant and jargon, and as enthusiasm and fancy: yet still there are some, and I hope many, here, who can set to their seal, with me, to the attestation of the certainty of this truth, were this required.

Let me, therefore, put you in mind of this, "that religion is not a system of notions, but a practical thing." For I am sure that the experience of its power upon your souls will give you a clearer idea of it, than all the books of

the world can do. Therefore, when our Lord Jesus came to teach us our creed, he did not think fit to draw it up into any methodical scheme or discourse. Nay so far was he from doing so, that neither he nor his apostles would so much as form any compend or confession of faith to be subscribed by us, or imposed upon us. For his design was not to fill the world with disputes, or to start controversies to answer them again, in order to stock the world with notions and opinions. No, no; his design was more noble and sublime, more generous and divine, *viz.* to promote piety and a holy life, as the best way to attain unto the true knowledge and belief of divine truths. And, therefore, he tells us, that the way to know the doctrine, which he preached, was to do it. So that, as reconciliation lays the foundation of communion with God: so a close and exact obedience, holiness and devotion, is that by which a man is capacitated actually to maintain and increase communion and fellowship with God.

Having, therefore, now given you a sufficient account, as I humbly hope, of this great subject of communion with God; I may perhaps be thought to have, in a great measure, directed you by it, how ye may receive the benefit and blessing of God's dwelling with you; and that, therefore, I ought to detain you no longer on this head. Yet since I proposed to consider, how we are to improve the great privilege of God's dwelling among us, in relation to the publick worship of God, for which end this house is built: I hope it will be no useless inquiry, to give you a few thoughts further this way.

Let it, therefore, be seriously considered by you, that it will be a sad matter, if after all the pains and expence men have been at in making this place convenient for the administration of God's ordinances, and the great pains God has taken otherwise to renew and reform you: I say,

If after all this, ye continue as wicked and godless as other men, and perish at last.

Therefore, let me entreat you to labour after communion with your God in public ordinances, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. And, therefore, let me suggest a few things to you, which I hope may be exceedingly useful to you, through God's assistance. When, therefore, ye come to worship God and attend upon his ordinances in this house; be careful, in the first place, to consider seriously with whom ye have to do. Take heed to yourselves, that ye offer not the sacrifice of fools before God, seeing he is your witness now, and will be your judge hereafter. Ye profess, in coming here, to worship and glorify God. Act, therefore, accordingly, to the honour of God, and for your own good.

In the *next* place, be concerned to employ yourselves wholly in the sacred work ye are here engaged in. What petitions or thanksgivings are put up to God, join in; especially such as do suit your own case, and express your wants or mercies most. Assent to such truths as ye see to be scriptural ones; and examine if what we say of them be consonant to that divine standard: for I am far from desiring you to believe me upon my single testimony, unless I can give you sufficient evidence for the same. Give your hearty and ready consent to the gospel calls and invitations, and accordingly come off from sin and Satan to Christ and his service, and imbark yourselves wholly on this bottom of your Saviour's merits, as the only secure foundation of salvation and eternal life. When ye hear of the threatnings of God's word against sinners, and of the miseries prepared for them; stand in awe, and sin not, but break off entirely from all pernicious counsels. When promises are insisted upon, explained and improved, receive in the goodness of God, thus manifested to you; and assent

assent to the verity of them, and plead them in prayer in the time of your need. Yield a ready compliance with the commands of God, when explained and urged upon you, and resolve to model your lives accordingly to the praise of God, and the honour of your holy profession. And as ye are obliged to yield entire obedience to all the commands of God, so particularly to that which Christ calls his New Commandment, that we love another: For this is the badge of our profession, by which all men may attain to know if they are Christians indeed, But alas, where shall we find true Christians, if this be the mark and evidence of such? Let us therefore be the more concerned, to approve ourselves to be Christians, indeed, by loving the brethren, even though they differ from us in a great many little things. For if we do not so, how can we justly conclude that we are past from death to life! And how can we ever, without this, attain to fellowship with God here on earth, or in heaven hereafter? But if it be our business thus to mind religion in earnest, we may justly hope to have communion with the Father, and the Son, both now and for ever.

And now I am come to the end of what I had to say to the three propositions I laid down to be considered; which I may be perhaps supposed to have insisted upon so largely, that any thing further by way of application, may be looked upon as superfluous, if not impertinent. But I hope ye will bear with me on this occasion, seeing in all probability we shall never have the like again, if I presume to trespass yet further upon your patience, by recommending to you the practical consideration of our holy religion, by way of conclusion; which is all the application or improvement I shall make of it.

THE CONCLUSION.

LET your thoughts, therefore, my friends, go along with me, and take a view of our holy Christian profession, from this eminent head thereof, which we have been considering: for from this pinnacle we may see the whole frame of this spiritual edifice; seeing the communion and converse of God and men is that about which all religion is conversant, and to the advancement of which, here and hereafter, it is wholly calculated. And, therefore, I hope the general consideration of this grand subject here (to the illustration and advancement of which all particular truths are subservient, conducting us thither, as the rivers do to the ocean from whence they flow) will be found to be no less proper for a conclusion, especially considering the occasion, than lesser inferences and particular uses would have been. And I do much mistake, if what I am about to say, will not be found to be as useful, if not more than the common and vulgar way of improving such-like truths.

There are three grand considerations of our religion, which we may properly be led to think upon, from the subject already discoursed of, and which may, I hope, be of very considerable use to us, both by giving us a distinct idea of Christianity, and by confirming us as to the verity of it, and consequently by making us fall more in love with it, in order to practise it, and pursue the design thereof. For the consideration of the nature, of the certainty, and of the excellency of religion, is what I am now in quest of.

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And, I. what we have said of God's dwelling with men on the earth, doth exceedingly tend to clear up the notion of religion to us; seeing religion must be supposed, not only to be consistent with this end, but to be something that is directly calculated by God to subserve and promote so great and beneficial a design as this is, of God's dwelling with us, and our being admitted to communion with him, both in time and for all eternity.

Now our religion is considered two ways, *viz.* either casually, or rather instrumentally, as it is "a doctrine revealed to us, in order to lead us in to God for our happiness; or finally and effectively, as it denotes a holy frame of soul this way produced in us, by which we study to please God, to converse with him, and to be happy in the enjoyment of him. And both these ways we may attain to form a genuine idea of religion, from what I have said before concerning God's dwelling with men upon the earth.

For, as to the first consideration, we may from thence see, that "religion is a doctrine revealed by God to men in the Scriptures, concerning the knowledge of himself in Christ, necessary and sufficient to salvation, and wholly calculated to make us holy and happy, here and hereafter, by leading us in to the enjoyment of God and Christ."

This definition or description of religion, doctrinally considered (which the apostle calls, by a compendious way of speaking, the doctrine according to Godliness; and elsewhere, the truth according to Godliness), will deserve your serious meditations; for I do not apprehend that there is one word redundant or superfluous, nor any thing wanting or defective in it.

For this description of our religion will let you see the difference there is between it and that which we call natural religion, in as far as this is a revealed doctrine. It

will lead us up to the author of it, seeing it is revealed by God. It will shew us our concern in this doctrine, since it is given out to men. It will put us in mind, where this is to be found, since this revelation is only in the scriptures. It will satisfy us, as to the great subject of this doctrine and revelation, that it is all concerning the knowledge of God himself, and that in Christ, to denote the peculiarity of the gospel-economy now. I say also that this is necessary to salvation, to shew how weak and insufficient mere nature is without it, and to put us in mind that it is so absolutely to us who live under the discoveries of it; though I meddle not with the state of heathens, who are to be judged another way than we. And I say, that this is sufficient to salvation, that I may assert the perfection of scripture, and the revelation contained therein, in opposition to the supposed imperfection thereof, without traditions and determinations of Popes or councils, or the like fancies of some men. And I say, moreover, in this description, that revealed religion is wholly calculated to make us holy and happy here and hereafter, to shew what the great end and scope thereof is, with respect to us. And after all I thought fit to specify how in what respect it makes us reach these ends (and wherein also both holiness and happiness do consist) by adding, that it does so, by leading men in to the enjoyment of God and Christ: for this is the only way to be both holy and happy, as well as that wherein these do stand.

So that it doth plainly appear from all this, that the nature and tendency of the Christian religion, is to improve the minds and souls of men, by rendering them fit for divine communications, that God may indeed dwell in their hearts and lives, and that, accordingly they may have fellowship with the father and with the son. And this leads me to consider religion effectively, as it denotes a holy disposition

position of soul, wrought there by the spirit of God, impregnating gospel-considerations to us by his own secret but efficacious working.

Now as to this second consideration of religion, I shall not dispute here how or in what way it is wrought, seeing all must allow that there is such a thing, as is too plain to be denied, from what account we have of the holy and heroical lives and deaths of martyrs and saints, many of whom were both the wisest and most learned men of the world.

I shall, therefore, only attempt to give you some idea of religion under this consideration, as I have done with respect to the former. And in order to this, I must put you in mind of that description of religion, in the general notion of it, abstracting from the Christian, which I gave the world in a former discourse. That description was this: "That religion is a serious concern, and studious endeavour to seek after God and come unto him, in that way which we think will be most acceptable and pleasing to him, and consequently effectual to reach the end designed, and all this proceeding from a right apprehension and firm belief of God's being and beneficence, and from a just sense of our dependance upon him, and accountableness to him, and of our being designed for a future state, and consequently of our being to be rewarded or punished there, according to our life and behaviour here, with respect to the above-mentioned concern and endeavour." Now a very small alteration in this description, by adding what is peculiar to the Christian religion, will make it a proper definition thereof. For what other idea can we form of Christianity, taken in this second sense, but this; "That it is a serious concern, and studious endeavour, to seek after God and come unto him, in order to enjoy him, and have communion with him, in that way which our Lord Jesus

has revealed and prescribed, as that which is only acceptable and pleasing to him, and consequently effectual to reach the end designed: and all this proceeding from a right apprehension and firm belief, both of God's being and beneficence, and of Christ's mission into the world, his suffering for us there, and ascension again to heaven; and so of our acting in a dependance upon him, and as accountable to him, as persons designed for a future state, and consequently of our being to be rewarded or punished there, according to our life and behaviour here, with respect to the above-mentioned concern and endeavour."

I hope this account both of religion in general, and of the Christian religion in particular, will be satisfactory to all those that are desirous to have a distinct notion and idea of so momentous a thing, with respect to the regulation of their lives accordingly. For this is indeed the sum of the description of religion, under this last acceptance of it; that it is the governing principle of good men, both as to their thoughts and affections, and their words and actions. And that it may be so to us, in order to our being made both holy and happy, that God may dwell with us, and in us, and we attain to dwell with him here and for ever, is the great end I proposed to myself, in making all this pains to be^{so} accurate and exact, in this account of things which I propose to your most serious thoughts, in order to be further stretched out and improved by all of you.

And in order to this, I suppose ye will easily see from hence, that religion is something more generous and noble, than most men seem to apprehend. For from both these descriptions of religion, it doth plainly appear, that they do exceedingly err, who imagine that it is nothing else but a fine speculative science, consisting in high notions, without any immediate relation to practice: And that

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they do no less mistake its nature and design, who place it wholly in an external profession, when the scope of it is not so much to entitle us to the name of Christianity, as to make us Christians indeed. And from hence, also does do less plainly appear, That seeing so great a change is this way effected on the soul, Christianity can never be supposed to consist in the discriminative name and rituals of a party; since all persons, of whatever denomination or nation, are accepted, who fear God, and work righteousness.

II. I proceed now to consider the certainty of our holy religion, from what I have said. Not that I pretend here to prove the truth of Christianity, against Atheists and Deists, which many have done to good purpose of late, and which I spake also something to, against the first of these enemies especially, in a discourse which I have already once and again referred unto. For my design here is only to confirm those, who believe and assent to what I have already said concerning God's dwelling with men upon the earth: that our holy religion is indeed every way divine. And this I shall do from two considerations, that may be of use to strengthen the faith of those, who are not already abandoned to scepticism on so weighty and momentous a truth as that we have discoursed of.

The first consideration is, "that there is nothing more consonant to the divine perfections, than our religion; and that upon this account it seems unquestionably to owe God for its author and original.

And as to this, I shall only appeal to mens own reason and conscience, if they can imagine any thing that tends more directly to exalt the sovereignty of God over all his creatures, as to his creating, preserving and governing them as he sees fit: or if they can find any doctrine that gives us a more just representation of God's unspotted holiness.

liness and righteousness. And what religion can be found, that raises us to so noble an idea of God's nature and attributes, and to so just an admiration of him? for is it possible, that any thing can more exalt the greatness and power of God, or his wisdom and sapience, or his love and goodness, or his truth and faithfulness, than this revelation of God doth? seeing Christianity is wholly founded on these attributes, especially as they concur to the making up that master-piece of God's providence and Government, *viz.* the incarnation of Christ and the salvation of sinners this way: for in this all the perfections of God do most eminently shine forth. So that God, being the supreme good, and communicative of himself to reasonable creatures, who are made capable of such intercourse with him: may we not conclude, seeing all other religions are so unworthy of God, excepting this only; that, therefore, this is indeed the genuine production and issue of his beneficence to men, and, therefore, discovered to them, in order to their salvation?

The second consideration is this, that there is nothing more agreeable to right reason, than this revealed religion is.

For what has any man been able to discover in this, that shocks reason, or is inconsistent with it? I know indeed many heathens of old, as well as Jews and sceptics of late, have attempted to find flaws in it. But it is as true, that they have been unanswerably refuted to their own shame, and the confirmation of Christianity. For indeed, though this religion do contain several truths too high for us fully to comprehend; yet there is nothing to be found in it, that is any way contradictory or absurd. And it is so admirably accommodated to our reason and way of thinking, that it seems for the most part to be built upon nature itself, though not as now corrupted, but as pure and

refined ; and that in so admirable a manner, as to agree with the weakness of the most ordinary understanding, at the same time that it gives scope to the highest flights of learned speculations. And as to those things that some men would fain expunge out of their creed, as unintelligible mysteries ; I would fain ask them, if it be any more unreasonable that an infinite being should reveal to us some things as certain, which we cannot fully comprehend ; than it is, that an infinitely capacious mind should understand more than our limited and poor thoughts can exactly apprehend. Therefore, after all men can say, it is to me a great argument for the divinity of the scriptures, and the religion therein revealed ; that, notwithstanding the sublimity of many things therein discovered, there is not one to be found, that, upon a modest and impartial survey, can be justly said to involve any absurdity or contradiction. And this I durst venture to make good, were it not that this would carry me out too far at this time, and that I hope there is no need for such a discourse to this auditory.

And now I hope I have said enough to evince the certainty of our Christian profession to those that are not deists or sceptics upon this head. And therefore I may venture to proceed to consider the excellency of it ; which is the last thing I am to speak to in this epilogue.

The third thing, therefore, to be considered at this time, is the excellency and valuableness of the Christian religion.

And though this doth sufficiently appear from all the preceding discourse, and particularly from what we said as to communion with God ; yet I hope it may not be amiss to add something here, that may induce you further to fall in love with religion, in order to practise the same.

Now the excellency of religion cannot be better known, than by its effects; for from these doth the scripture itself receives its eulogies and commendatory epithets; as when it is said to make the simple wise, to convert the ungodly, to sanctify the soul, and to make a man more excellent than his neighbour. For religion is the way of life, and is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath, or from the lowest hell, as the Hebrew seems rather to import, and as the Chaldee paraphrase and Syriac version read the place. So that there are two things in religion suggested to us in these words, which will abundantly discover its excellency, viz. that it is above to the wise, as tending to the elevation and spirituality of their spirits; and that it is this way they are saved from the lower school or hell, even the infernal pit.

Therefore, 1st, The excellency and valuableness of religion appears in this; that it enlarges all the faculties of the soul, and makes them more ample, noble, and free. It widens and dilates a man's soul, and gives as it were a new soul to him; by brightning and enlightning the mind, by procuring liberty to the will from whatever tended to enslave it and make it run too much bias, and by inspiring and quickning all the wheels of the soul's motion.

So that true religion enlarges and greatens the soul in all its actings. For the nearer a man comes to God, who is infinite in all perfections, and continually acting accordingly; the vaster and more unbounded will he find his soul to be. So that, to be straitned in our minds, narrowed in our souls, and confined in our apprehensions, and affections, and actions, is a sign of a man's being slenderly, if at all, tinctured with religion.

For a true Christian cannot be satisfied with any thing less than God; his enlargement of soul being such, that the

whole world cannot fill or satisfy its desires. For when a man is thus become, if I may say so, master of himself, and is restored to the true possession of his own faculties and powers, he can be bounded no longer by, or confined within the limits of mundane enjoyments. The wide world, as we call it, becomes then but as a prison to him, and the whole sphere of mortality is too narrow for his aspiring thoughts. This elevated and great souled champion, does not weep for more worlds, as is famed of Alexander the Great, who a little after found a coffin large enough to contain him, but scorns it and ten thousand more, upon the supposition they were; for nothing less than God himself, the infinitely perfect and glorious God, can satiate his soul, and content his mind.

And therefore, he lives above himself, as well as all other things; denying himself as well as undervaluing all created things, in order to enjoy his God. He resigns himself to God, in order to enjoy him. And we may easily imagine how our souls must be enlarged, dilated, and greatned, after we are elevated to the enjoyment of God, though this be according to our weak measure, gradually and by various steps.

But, by denying ourselves and acting thus, we come to be restored to a just dominion and power over ourselves, by overcoming our sins and passions. And in nothing more than in this doth the wonderful efficacy of religion appear. And O! how glorious is it to experience this in ourselves; to find, I say, reason giving up the scepter to the gentle sway of religion, and from thence receiving commission again to subdue the unruly motions of self-will and passion. For from this time sweet peace takes possession of the soul, instead of the tyrannical lusts that lorded over it before. And how delightful then must the change be, when instead of the wild and confused rule

of avarice, malice, lasciviousness, and pride, men become heavenly, mild, holy, and humble?

In this surely stands the most noble conquest of the soul, when a man becomes master of himself, and finds pure religion and calm reason at the helm, piloting his life through the unstable sea of this world. And this is the happy revolution that religion makes in us, when it is submitted unto. For while other men are slaves to sin, folly, and vanity, the truly pious soul is above all these. So that, in all respects, religion must be looked upon as the only cause and original of true nobility and magnanimity of soul; for it is only pious persons that can say with Paul, we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us.

And from hence it is, that pious souls are stirred up, and encouraged to act as public spirited persons in the world, in defence of the church, and for the interest of all good men, without confining themselves, as others do, to the little concerns that relate only to themselves. For, as an eminent and ancient Christian author says, "This is looked upon to be the first work of a religious man's righteousness, to love those who are of the same class with himself, and to have communication and converse with them, both on earth and in heaven. And hence he freely gives to them, and bestows upon them what he has as he is able. And seeing he is friendly and bountiful this way, he must needs hate those that are wicked, seeing he hates every thing that is evil; for he is careful to act faithfully to himself, to his neighbour, and to the commands of God. He then is the servant of God in a proper sense, who subjects himself voluntarily to the divine precepts. But he that does not so much obey these because commanded, as love them because he sees them

to

to be excellent, is the man that is most pure in heart, and is therefore most truly the friend of God.

But, 2dly, The excellency of religion doth also appear in this, that it tends to make us happy both here and hereafter.

But religion does not only enter a man into the way that leads to felicity, and life eternal, but tends also to carry us on perpetually towards the same. It does indeed dawn pleasantly upon us at first; but it does likewise ever after shine more and more towards the perfect day. And not only so, but it carries us along with itself, all the while we live in this world, until it land us in a better, and till we set with it in the bed of perpetual rest and peace.

Therefore, after it has directed and assisted us to make our peace with God, and elevated our spirits above terrene and fading things, it leads us in to act ever afterwards as his devoted friends and servants. And from hence we find true serenity and peace of mind wrought in us, together with the purest and most satisfying contentment and joy, and our thoughts and affections this way mellowed down into the sweetest composure and harmony. By which religion is found to conduce much even to our outward happiness in this world, by obliging and assisting us to walk wisely, soberly, meekly, and humbly; and therefore, must be supposed much more to tend to our eternal bliss, as leading us in to glorify and enjoy God, both in this world and the next. For it takes us off from low and mean ends, designs, and interests, and makes us mind the great things wherein our true and lasting felicity doth consist.

AND

AND now, my dear friends, I have led you from the particular consideration of God's dwelling and conversing with men upon the earth, to the general consideration of religion itself. But I have not reached my end, in this, till I have led you from hence back again, (and I hope with a great deal of advantage, after what I have said on this head, as well as the former) to consider what God doth require and expect from you as to practice. For to what purpose do we know these things, unless we act accordingly, and make religion our business indeed; seeing this, even doctrinally considered, is wholly calculated for practice, and in a final sense, is holiness and practice itself?

Hence we find that God in his word doth ever represent this as a practical thing. Enoch and Noah's religion is described to be a walking with God, or a studious concern to please him. And Abraham is commanded to walk before God, and so to seek after true perfection. And thus Israel is enjoined to walk after the Lord, in obedience to his holy law. For what does God require of man, as the prophet Micah says, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God? And therefore, we Christians are required to walk so, as Christ gave us an example, and to walk in the spirit, as an evidence that we live in it; that so we may attain to walk in all the commandments of God blameless.

So that, from all this, we may sufficiently see how much God requires and expects of us, that we should
make

make religion our business, and approve ourselves to be the sincere and faithful servants of our Lord and Master, by living over all that knowledge of divine truth he has given us ; in order, first, to attain unto that communion with God and Christ which the scripture speaks of, and then to maintain it, which is best done by an even and close walking with God, according to the tenure and scope of his holy laws and institutions. In order to which, pray consider seriously what the character of a true Christian is, as it is deducible from the word of God. And for this end, accept these few hints from me at this time ; which may perhaps be serviceable to your further and closer thoughts on this subject.

“ A true Christian then, with whom God dwells, and
 “ who hath fellowship with the father and the son, is one ;
 “ that besides the outward baptism with water, is internal-
 “ ly baptized by the washing of regeneration and renew-
 “ ing of the Holy Ghost : Being thus born not according
 “ to the flesh or the will of man, but of God. And there-
 “ fore he is careful to be really what he makes profession
 “ of.

“ And seeing the mind must be cultivated and improv-
 “ ed, in order to the right regulation of the life ; he is
 “ careful to examine and try things by scripture and sober
 “ ratiocination, that he may not be imposed upon or take
 “ things on trust. For he reckons it a mean and unwor-
 “ thy thing, for a Christian to be able to give no other
 “ account of the principles of his religion, than Pagans
 “ and Mahometans do, *viz.* that his parents were of that
 “ persuasion and taught him to be so, and that it is the re-
 “ ligion of his country. Therefore he studies the word of
 “ God diligently and humbly ; in order to embrace the
 “ truths thereof, upon conviction and a rational choice,
 “ from satisfactory evidences of their certainty ; as well

as from the purity of its precepts, and the exceeding great reward exhibited in its promises.

“Hence he cannot allow himself to believe, that to be his duty, which God expressly declares against. And, therefore, though all the world should agree to recommend idolatry, as the best way of worship, he dares not fall in with them, whatever the consequence of his disobedience to men, on this score, may be supposed to be.

“Nor can he see any just reason, for his believing things contradictory and absurd, merely upon human authority or for secular ends. For he judges, that as faith is the evidence of spiritual things, which we must believe upon the credibility of the relater; so our senses are the proper judges of their own objects. And, therefore, he thinks it far better to interpret some expressions of scripture in a figurative or spiritual sense, than to adhere rigidly to the letter, when the sense is unintelligible.

“And yet he is not so presumptuous and proud, as to measure all things revealed to us, by the weak line of his own intellect. For as he concludes it absurd to deny his own being, because he is not able fully to comprehend how he is made, and doth subsist and act; so he thinks it much more unreasonable, to deny things relating immediately to God, when he gives us the fullest assurances of them, merely because we cannot fully comprehend how they are.

“Therefore he is no sceptic tossed to and fro with every objection against religion, far less with the foolish jests that profane wits make use of to ridicule it. But having received the truth, he stands fast in it; and wherein he doubteth, makes serious and sober inquiry; that thus he may come to be more fully established in the faith, and that so his obedience to God may be his reasonable service, and not a blind devotion.

“Neither

“ Neither is he an enthusiast, expecting or pretending to
 “ immediate revelation, when his interest and duty is so
 “ plainly discovered to him in the scriptures ; that he sees
 “ no need any Christian has of such an extraordinary way
 “ of teaching, far less any ground given him to expect it.

“ And yet he is careful not to run to the contrary ex-
 “ treme, by imagining that the spirit of God has with-
 “ drawn himself from the church, as to ordinary opera-
 “ tions, as well as extraordinary gifts. For the sense and
 “ experience of his own wants and impotence, oblige him
 “ continually to breathe after and carefully to wait for the
 “ benign and sweet influences of the holy spirit ; in order
 “ this way to be led into all truth, to be assisted in all the
 “ steps of his spiritual journey through the world, and to
 “ be rendered fit for communion and fellowship with God.

“ He is no solifidian, that hopes to be saved by a chi-
 “ merical faith that is barren of spiritual fruit. But he is
 “ zealous of good works, as being acceptable to God, ho-
 “ nourable to religion, profitable to men, and necessary to
 “ salvation.

“ Yet he dares not place his religion in mere morals or
 “ externals, but is careful to act from right principles, and
 “ particularly from faith, as knowing that what proceeds
 “ not from thence is sin, and that if God should narrowly
 “ watch his actions, he must be for ever undone, unless
 “ God accept of them for Christ’s sake.

“ Therefore he is wholly dead to himself, as to the ex-
 “ pectation of salvation by what he can do. For his con-
 “ cern is, that Christ may be made of God unto him
 “ both wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemp-
 “ tion.

“ Hence he makes all his approaches to God by the
 “ one mediator, the man Jesus Christ, without presuming
 “ to any merit in himself, or making use of any others as

“ sub-mediator

“ sub-mediators either of attonement or intercession, by a
“ voluntary submission, which God has given us no ground
“ for. For he comes to God himself as to his gracious
“ father, reconciled in Christ; as one that he knows is
“ ready and willing to accept poor creatures that come
“ unto him this way.

“ He is the same in private that he is in public, the
“ same in his closet as in the church, being concerned to
“ walk within his house, as David did, with a perfect heart,
“ and to approve himself to God as well as to men, by
“ keeping a conscience void of offence to both.

“ He joins seriousness with chearfulness, being seriously
“ chearful, and chearfully serious, as aiming at a compos-
“ ed and serene temper of mind and spirit always. For
“ he knows he has to do with serious as well as excellent
“ things; and therefore thinks a great man, (Sir Francis
“ Walsingham.—See Wanly's History of Man), had just
“ reason to speak as he did to some that wondered at his
“ retirement: Ah, said he, while we laugh, all things are
“ serious round about us; God is serious in all his works
“ and providences; Christ is serious in his gospel offers
“ and discoveries; and the spirit is serious while he lives
“ with us; and surely death, hell, and heaven, and a fu-
“ ture judgment are serious things; and are not all things
“ we can think of so too? Shall then man be the only fool
“ and buffoon of the creation, to laugh and play away
“ his time; especially when he comes to have, as it were,
“ one foot in the grave? And he thinks another great
“ man, (Sir John Mason. Wanly's History of Man),
“ spake a great deal of sense, when he said, that after all
“ his studies, travels, negotiations, and experience of men
“ and things, he found these things to remain upon his
“ mind as most solid truths, viz. That seriousness is a
“ man's best wisdom, temperance his best physic, and a

“ good conscience his best estate, and that he found all
 “ things had forsaken him upon a death-bed, but God
 “ and prayer, for that he did look upon all his time past
 “ to be lost, except that part of it which had been spent in
 “ praying or doing good.

“ He is therefore concerned to make a right use of re-
 “ tirement from the world, which he takes pleasure in,
 “ except when the service of God, or providential calls
 “ forbid him to indulge this humour. For he finds there
 “ is a great deal of truth in the old saying, Qui bene
 “ latuit bene vixit; he that attains to improve retirement
 “ best, lives best also. Let foolish men look on this as
 “ preciseness or melancholy, he values it not. Nor does
 “ he envy the meddling and busy man, who for worldly
 “ interest, though perhaps under the specious pretence of
 “ seriousness and public usefulness, must have a finger in
 “ every man’s concerns. For he can say as Scipio of old
 “ and with more reason than he, Nunquam minus solus
 “ sum quam cum sum solus, I am never less alone than
 “ when alone. For though he be alone, he is not with-
 “ out company or business, that the ignorant world is
 “ not acquainted with.

“ For he lives above the creature and all earthly enjoy-
 “ ments: and though he has to do with created things
 “ as well as others, yet he does not suffer his mind to ter-
 “ minate on these as his principal end, but passes through
 “ them unto God. And, therefore, he rejoiceth, in out-
 “ ward comforts, as if he rejoiced not; and sorrows, in
 “ the time of trouble and calamity, as if he sorrowed not
 “ and uses the world, so as neither to abuse it or himself
 “ with it. For he remembers the time is short, and that
 “ the fashion of the world passeth away. “ And, there-
 “ fore, his comforts lead him into God as his benefactor
 “ and the donor of all his mercies: his troubles drive him

“ into

“into him that smites him ; and his dangers make him
“flee to God for help and assistance.

“He has a sincere and cordial respect to all the laws,
“ordinances and institutions of God. So that he cannot
“allow himself to obey one and reject another : but is
“concerned to shew his obedience equally to all ; though
“with a special regard to those commandments, that do
“most directly condemn the lusts that naturally are most
“dear to him. And for the same end he chiefly delights
“in those ordinances that he finds lead him in most directly
“to communion with God.

“High thoughts of God, and low thoughts of himself
“keep him in just poise, between despair and presumption.
“And the sense of God's goodness and his own unworthiness,
“doth both encourage and incite him to approach unto
“God, and keeps him humble under all his attainments.

“Therefore love and reverence do equally concur in
“all his devotions. For he worships God as *optimus* &
“*maximus*, the best and the greatest being, as his highest
“sovereign, and as his chief good. And, therefore, he
“remembers, both his own dependant state and his rela-
“tion to God, whom he is allowed to come to as his Fa-
“ther in Christ : whom, therefore, he adores and serves,
“not according to the oldness of the letter, but in spirit
“and in truth.

“And as he loves him that begetteth, so he loves all
“them also that are begotten thus spiritually unto God.
“And this he does impartially, to the best of his knowledge,
“without being confined to a party, or subdivision of
“Christians. For he reckons religion to consist, not so
“much in those things, wherein he conscientiously dis-
“sents from others, and wherein he charitably believes
“others dissent thus also from him ; but in the great es-
“sentials and substantials, wherein all good men of all

“ denominations are agreed. In which, if others reckon him
 “ of too large a charity, he thinks it is safest erring on
 “ this side, if, indeed, it be possible to err thus. And,
 “ therefore, with respect to such persons, he craves leave
 “ to join in his amen to the apostle, and say with him,
 “ that though faith and hope be essential Christian graces,
 “ yet charity or rather (as it ought to be translated) love is
 “ greater than all these; of which this is one property,
 “ that it thinks no evil.

“ But seeing a true Christian knows that he has more
 “ and greater business to transact with God, than all the
 “ world besides: therefore, he is above all things concern-
 “ ed to have his approbation; that whether he be present
 “ in the body or called to leave it, he may be accepted of
 “ him.

“ And, therefore, he lives constantly as under the awful
 “ and serious apprehensions of a present deity, whose eyes
 “ he knows are ever upon him, taking notice of all he
 “ thinks, designs, says or does.

“ For which reason he is careful to have his accounts
 “ kept clear with God: And, therefore, finds himself in-
 “ dispensibly obliged to examine and try himself daily;
 “ that he may rectify what is amiss, beg pardon for mis-
 “ takes and faults, and distinctly know what he has re-
 “ ceived and stands in need of, and accordingly what he
 “ has to pray and praise for.

“ For he is not so foolish and conceited, as to think he
 “ has attained to such a measure of religion, that he need
 “ go no further: but he labours all his days to grow in
 “ grace, knowledge and usefulness, pressing thus forward
 “ towards the mark, that the nearer he draws to the world
 “ of light, love and bliss, he may be the fitter for it. So
 “ that he never rests or sits down, until he attain to the
 “ end

“end of his faith at last, even the compleat salvation of
“his soul.

“In a word, he is one who is careful to observe the whole
“will of God, both with respect to the externals and vitals
“of Christianity. For he acts from the most noble and
“vigorous principles of saving faith and divine love, for
“the highest and best ends, the advancement of God’s
“glory, and the increase of his kingdom in the world.
“And, therefore, as he brings down his religion from no-
“tions to practice, as one that has no separate interest from
“that of his master: so he dares to own his being such,
“whatever it cost him, and will open his windows towards
“the God of Jerusalem, though he should fall under the
“greatest severity from men for doing so. For he is not
“only careful to found on the true and sure foundation,
“but takes heed also to the materials he uses towards car-
“rying on the work of the superstructure, that these be
“not hay or stubble, or such like combustible stuff; but
“that they be gold and silver, and solid things that can
“bear the fire of the greatest probation. And, therefore,
“as he comes to the light, that he may know if his deeds
“be wrought in God: So he behaves in all things as a
“mortal and accountable creature, that must die and be
“judged, and be happy or miserable for an eternity; and
“therefore, finds himself obliged to labour to please his
“God in all things, that whether he live or die he may
“be the Lord’s, and find favour in his sight.”

Lo! here is the man that is only intitled justly and
truly to the character of a Christian. And, therefore, let
it be the great study of every soul here, to become such:
that we may through grace, walk worthy of such a God,
and such a Saviour and master, as we profess to serve and
hope to enjoy: that so we may not receive his grace in

vain, but may live as heirs of a future glory, and as candidates for the felicity of that state.

For which purpose, set your selves to reverence and fear God more and more. For to man he hath said, that the fear of God is his wisdom, and to depart from evil his best understanding.

And that your fear and obedience may be acceptable to God, set yourselves to the constant and diligent study of the holy scriptures. For this is a considerable part of a Godly and blessed man's character; that he meditates on God's law day and night. And hence it is that the Bereans are so much commended in scripture; because they searched the scriptures themselves, in order to know the things which the apostles preached, with the greater certainty.

And when ye hear the word of God explained and applied, consider it as that which is given you in order to practice. Therefore, despise not prophesying though ye may perhaps observe some weakness in the speaker: for ye are to receive it not as the word of Man, but as it is indeed the word of God. For the end of the ministry is, the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ.

Therefore, be fervent and serious in prayer: which is the great mean to attain to communion with the father and the son. For this is the way by which, as I observed above, we attain to immediate converse with God: so as to become as it were temples of the holy spirit.

And how happy should I reckon myself, if this were the consequent of my pains in meditating and discoursing on this great head of God's dwelling with men on the earth, to this auditory; that henceforth ye might be so stirred up with love and zeal for God and goodness, as to make religion your great and main business and concern.

in order to become temples of the Holy Ghost. That thus, all of us here might upon just grounds be able to say, with a great and apostolical man of old. "Before we
"believed in God, our heart was a habitation full of corruption and exceeding weak, even as now the Heathenish
"temples are: for our hearts were then full of idols and
"their worship, and where devils had their abode; seeing
"we acted wholly contrary to God and his interests: But
"now we are become temples of the true God. If ye
"ask, how this change was effected? I will give you an
"account of it. Having received the pardon of our sins
"through faith in the name of Christ our Lord, we do
"immediately become new persons, being created thus
"over again. So that upon this, God has entered into
"this our habitation, and has actually taken possession of
"it, and so really dwells in us. If ye enquire how can
"this be? know, that seeing the word of faith is in us,
"who are the called according to his promise, and justified and made holy by him: hence it comes to pass,
"that he himself (who doth all these things in us and for
"us) doth indeed prophesy in us. For he doth indeed
"thus dwell in us; and though we are mortal creatures,
"yet he opens the gate of his temple, when he pleaseth,
"which is the mouth which speaks forth his praise. He
"gives us repentance, and whatever we need. And in a
"word, he turns us into temples for his own use and service. Therefore, he that would be saved, must not so
"much consider the outward man, as him that dwells in
"in holy souls: for then he will come to see, that such
"rapturous and holy words and actions, as others are incapable of, must be from God that dwells within. This
"therefore, is the idea we are to have of the spiritual temple, that is built up for God.

Let me therefore beg of you, that ye would pray and labour

labour to be such. For which let me take leave of you, in the words of the same affectionate and devout writer. (Barnabas in Epist. Cathol. page 53. sect. ult.) “ I beseech you brethren, to take my advice in good part. For remember “ that the day draws nigh, in which all the workers of “ iniquity must perish with the evil one. For the Lord “ is near, and his reward is with him. Therefore, I do “ again and again beseech you, that ye would carefully “ watch over yourselves, and be faithful monitors to one “ another, that no hypocrisy may creep in among you. “ And may God, who governs the whole world, endue you “ with wisdom, knowledge, grace and patience: that ye “ may all of you be so taught of God, and so understand “ his will, that ye may be saved in the day of judgement. “ And while ye meditate upon the things that I have set “ before you, be mindful of me also, that if ye receive any “ advantage by my labours, I may receive good also by “ your prayers. I beg this favour from you; that as long “ as ye lodge in your earthly habitations, none of these “ duties may be neglected by you; but that ye may without ceasing enquire into and fill up every command of “ God by holiness and obedience. For which end chiefly “ I was induced to send you my thoughts this way, that “ ye might both be incited to, and encouraged in the “ ways of righteousness. Therefore, I take my leave of “ you now, as the children of divine love and peace. The “ God of glory and of grace be with your spirits. Amen.

A

Discourse concerning the Ministerial Work.

2 Corinth. II. 16. Compared with Chap. III. Ver. 5.

Who is sufficient for these things?—We are not sufficient of ourselves. But our sufficiency is of God.

AS there is no service more honourable than that of the ministry : so there is none more arduous and laborious. And, therefore, the greatest and most illustrious men God did ever employ this way, have been ready to sink under the apprehension of its seemingly insuperable difficulties.

THE
The great man of God Moses trembled at the thought of undertaking it, though he was under the immediate call of

March 14-1830.

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A Discourse concerning

of God. For when, God spake to him out of the burning bush, and said ; come now and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayst bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt : Moses attempts to decline this honorable message, by saying ; who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt ? And even after God had promised to be with him by his special presence ; yet he still excuses himself from the difficulties that attended this embassy, not only from the power and pride of Pharaoh, but also from what he foresaw of the incredulity and unperfuadableness of the Israelites. But behold, says he, they will not believe me, for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee. Nay when God had answered this excuse also, by three miraculous signs to confirm his faith, and to convince both Pharaoh and the Israelites : Yet he still insists upon his former strain in order to decline this errand. O my Lord, says he, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant, but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And after all this, when God had silenced him as to this objection also, by assuring him that he would be with his mouth : he continues notwithstanding to excuse himself, though beat out of all his arguments, by a kind of direct refusal of giving obedience to the divine command ; O my Lord, says he, I pray thee send by the hand of him thou shouldest send. As if he should say, Lord send by some fitter person than I am : or send by whom thou pleasest, so I be not the man : or, (as I rather think probably to be his sense) Lord send by the hand of thy Shiloh or thy Messiah ? I am not he. When then dost not thou fulfil thy promise of his coming ? Where is he all this while ? but however we interpret this, we see God takes this last expression so, as to be angry with Moses for it : though he does so temper his displeasure with men

cy, as to give him Aaron his brother to be his assistant. Now whence came it to pass that Moses should so industriously avoid this work, when he was so excellent a person above all others of his age, as to both bodily and mental endowments, and as to learning both natural, acquired and divine; when not only the work was so glorious in itself, but his call to it so clear, and his encouragements in undertaking it so remarkable? surely it was the sense he had of his own insufficiency, and the exceeding greatness of the undertaking. Otherwise no man ought more readily to have complied with it than he. For that this instance of Moses is not impertinent with respect to us, to shew us the difficulty of our more ordinary ministerial work, appears hence: That if his work was extraordinary above ours; so also were the promises made to him, and the encouragements and assistances given him, above what we can ever expect or pretend to.

But Moses was not the only man that acted at this rate. For the prophet Jeremiah treads, as it were, in his very steps. Therefore, when God calls him to his work, he excuses his accepting of it, and says, Lord behold I cannot speak, for I am a child. He means not in age surely, but in knowledge, experience and abilities. And yet this same Jeremiah was not called, as Elisha from the plow, Amos from the herdsmen, and many of the apostles from the fishing trade. But he was called from among the priests of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin; where no doubt he had the education of a scholar.

And if we descend here to the new testament, we have the great apostle of the gentiles, one of the greatest men, if not the greatest that ever lived on earth, adding his suffrage to the same judgment in the main, and crying out here; who is sufficient for these things? And if thou art not, O great apostle, may I justly say, who is? if thou find thy

thy shoulders ache under this burden ; what shall such poor creatures, as some of us are, be able to do towards the right discharge of it ?

I shall not, therefore, trouble you here with any large account of the scope of the context, or how these words are brought in. Let it suffice at this time to tell you that after the apostle had made an apology to the Corinthians for himself, from the 1st verse of the 2d chapter to the 14th, as to some things he had written about in his 1st epistle : He takes occasion in the next place, to add an apology for his whole ministry, against those that did calumniate him ; which he insists upon from the 14th verse of the 2d chapter to the 7th verse of the 3d chapter. After which, he insensibly slides into a comparison of the law of Moses and gospel of Christ : wherein he magnifies and prefers the gospel above the law in a great many respects.

And here, in the middle of his defence of his ministry, he twice acknowledgeth his own inability for this work, in the two verses we have read. Which he mentioneth, without doubt, not only out of humility, but out of prudence also ; in order to stop the mouths of those, who might be apt to think that he had too high an esteem of himself.

Now these two expressions make up the full sense of the apostle in each of them. For, whereas the first is more general, expressing the inability of all men for the right managing of such great things, in this exclamation ; who is sufficient for these things ? as if it were a question which none could answer : the second expression contains an answer unto it, and therein the apostle's comment on his own text. Wherein three things deserve our serious consideration. The first is, a supposed concession of what the first text contains and exhibits in the general ; *viz.* that no man is sufficient for these things ; *i. e.* for the difficulties

and duties of the ministerial work. The second is, the reason assigned, why all men are insufficient for these things; and that is, because there is no proportion between such a sublime and supernatural service as that of the gospel-ministry is, and the impotency and weakness of men since the fall. For so far is it from this, that we are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think a good thought. The third thing, therefore, is the obviating of an objection, that might be supposed to arise from the former considerations. For, whereas some might say: if none be sufficient for these things, why art thou and others so presumptuous as to undertake this great work? To this he answers, by adding; that the sufficiency of himself and other servants of Christ was of God. As if he should say, however hard the work is, yet still we know that God is able to assist us therein. For though we be insufficient, he is all-sufficient; for his strength is made perfect in his people's weakness. These then are the three heads considerable in the text or texts we have read, which gives us the full latitude of the apostles scope and meaning. And, therefore, according to these, we are led to a threefold inquiry here.

- I. Wherein the greatness and difficulty of the ministerial work lies.
- II. How insufficient ministers are of themselves for this work.
- III. In what respects they are rendered fit, (notwithstanding these considerations) for their work through the divine assistance.

I. INQUIRY.

Wherein the greatness and difficulty of the ministerial work lies.

Y

To

To this I might justly answer, by another query as the reverse of this, and say, wherein does the difficulty and greatness of the ministerial work not appear? for is there any one thing within the compass of this service, or any part of this sacred ministration, which does not denote difficulty and the greatest seriousness, if duly considered and performed as it ought to be?

Perhaps some may look on preaching as a very easy thing. But certainly it is their ignorance or inadvertency that makes them think so. For surely this is something else than a fine harangue, or pretty gingle of words made to please the fancy, and tickle the itching ears of a common auditory. It is something greater and more divine than a Ciceronian oration, though adorned and embellished with flowers from the ethics of Seneca, and other such moralists. For though an eloquence that is unaffected, be ever requisite and commendable, and the noble sentences and notions of heathens may very properly be brought in sometimes into such discourses, as we find even the apostle Paul did once and again; yet we must not run in this strain, as to juggle out the scriptural stile, and neglect its design, as too many have done of late. For preaching is a most serious thing, and relates to the judgment and conscience, in the greatest and most important concerns of the souls of men. And is this then a trivial or common performance? What! is it an easy matter to search into the deep things of God, and the mysterious and wonderful truths of the gospel of Christ, when each of them is an unfathomable depth; and when none of them can be rightly judged of, until its connection with all the rest be in some measure known? Is it an easy thing then, my friends, to attain to genuine ideas of the great truths of God? Or is it easy to bring them forth seasonably to a mixed auditory? Or is it nothing to be able to cloth

them in proper words and expressive terms, so as to let in the weakest minds into the knowledge of them? Or is it a small matter to bring them home to mens consciences, by a true and exact application? No, no; it will require the highest flights of a raised and sanctified imagination, the quickest contrivance of a lively invention, the greatest depth of a critical judgment, the strongest and most ready memory, the warmest bowels of affection, and the clearest conveyance of an uniform gospel-elocation, to do all these things as we ought. And therefore, in order to this, it will require much time and reading, serious and frequent meditation, fervent prayer, much heart-experience of religion, and great trust in and dependance upon God. For otherwise we can never expect to attain to a true, spiritual, edifying, and powerful gift of gospel-preaching.

And as sermonizing, so prayer, public prayer I mean, is no small attainment. What! is it a light or trivial matter, to speak to the most high God, as the mouth of some hundreds of souls; where perhaps there is as great a variety of cases and circumstances as there is of persons? O! my friends, who can rightly reflect on all these things, without due reverence, fear, and dread, lest we offer the sacrifice of fools in so solemn and immediate approaches to our infinitely glorious and exalted sovereign, in our petitions and desires, or in our praises and thank-givings?

And is not the work of discipline and government, and especially the administration of sacraments, matter of the highest import? Consider but one of these ordinances, viz. the Lord's Supper. Is it easy so to use the key of admission, as neither to admit knowingly such as may both ruin themselves by it, and bring a scandal upon religion, nor exclude any who, though ignorant and guilty of many infirmities, may yet be sincere in the main, and so

have a just title to it before God? And who can be ignorant, with what reverence and Godly concern, and with what love and joy a minister ought to dispense this ordinance, so as may be most for the edification and comfort of those that partake of it.

But these are not all the concerns that lie upon a minister. No, there are still many more behind, of no small concern and difficulty also. For is it not so to enquire into the state of his flock; to visit the sick, and to speak to them and pray for them, as persons upon the confines of eternal felicity or misery; to instruct the ignorant; to resolve the doubts and scruples of the afflicted in mind, or otherwise exercised souls; to carry aright to persons under all manner of circumstances; and to be able to convince gainfayers, and defend the gospel-truths by strenuous reasons. To do all these things, I say, so as we may approve ourselves to God, to men and to our own consciences, how high an attainment is it? And who of us are sufficient for it?

But it were endless to run out upon all things that might be said as to the parts of the ministers work. Nay, if I should but enlarge upon the hints I have now given, I might run out into a volume rather than one discourse. I shall therefore confine myself here to one consideration only, in order to evince the greatness and difficulty of this work. And this is its multiplicity of multiformity; this office being complex, and having several offices wrapt up in it. And sure I am, all persons will agree in this, that it is a very difficult thing for one man rightly to discharge many offices, each of which is enough to take up any man of the greatest abilities.

Now, that the ministerial office is a complex one, and made up of many, appears sufficiently from the different names and appellations that ministers get in scripture.

For

For sometimes they are called doctors and teachers, from their preaching and other instructions; sometimes pastors, overseers, or bishops, from the care of their flock; sometimes elders or presbyters, from their seniority in knowledge and in place, and their gravity in the discharge of it; sometimes servants or ministers of God and Christ, from their divine and Christian service, work and ministration; sometimes the angels of the churches, from the immediate relation they stand in to God, in their being employed by him for the good of the churches of Christ; sometimes also planters and waterers of the tree's of Christ's garden, as Paul and Apollos are called; and sometimes joint-workers with God, from the same reasons I have already mentioned.

But I shall pass by all these epithets and designations, lest I cut out more work for myself than I can go through with at this time, and confine myself to four offices, that seem to be plainly included in the notion of a gospel-minister. And these are the offices of an ambassador, of a steward, of a watchman or shepherd, and of a workman or labourer.

And 1st, gospel-ministers are called ambassadors. A title I confess that belongs only to the apostles and other extraordinary church offices, in the first and primary sense of the word; seeing they were persons immediately sent forth by Christ, in order to treat with men in the business of salvation, in order to lay a foundation for the church in all ages afterwards. But, though the apostles and other extraordinary office-bearers of the church, could only say, in a peculiar sense, that they were ambassadors for Christ, as though God should beseech them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God; yet it cannot be denied but that we, who treat with men in the name of God, about eternal salvation, are ambassadors also, tho'

in a secondary respect; seeing we are now the only persons (extraordinary officers being ceased) that act in the name of God, and in the stead of Christ, with relation to the concerns of the church, and for the advantage of immortal souls.

Now the office of an ambassador, or (if that be not allowed), of an envoy, or (if that also be rejected) of an ordinary messenger, is no less difficult than honourable. For they are persons of the greatest endowments and parts, that are usually chosen to fill such posts, and go upon such errands. And if so, how great a work must it be to act the part of an ambassador, envoy, or messenger, from the great God to poor sinful men? How difficult is it for us to keep in all things to our instructions, and to bring honour to our master, and felicity to ourselves, by a vigorous, prudent, and successful discharge of our message, and by a life and conversation worthy of this character, and suitable to the authority, and agreeable to the commission by which we act?

2dly, Ministers are not only ambassadors, but stewards also; and that in a twofold respect. For,

1. They are stewards or trustees of the truths of God, as the apostle speaks, when he says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of the gospel. For though the apostles were so in a more special sense than we are; yet as we succeed them in their more ordinary work, we are intrusted also with a stewardship this way. Now this trust of the truths of the gospel stands in two things.

(1.) In opening and explaining them for the spiritual edification of Christians; in which sense surely the ministers lips now, as well as the priests of old, should preserve knowledge.

(2.) In

(2.) In defending and maintaining them against adversaries and opposers. For a steward must not suffer vermin to eat up the provision of God's house; nor must a guardian or trustee, permit cheats or pretenders to ruin or damnify his minor or pupil's estate and goods. Therefore, Paul requires this in an overseer or pastor; "that he be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayer."

In the second place, ministers are stewards of the ordinances of God's church also, which they are obliged to dispense in all faithfulness to their congregations. For thus says the apostle Peter; "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

3dly, Ministers are also called watchmen and shepherds; both which characters and offices I take here under one notion. For the watchman in a city or camp, is the same to the citizens or soldiers, that a shepherd is to his sheep in the field or wilderness. And what the shepherd is to his flock against the approach of ravenous beasts, that is the watchman against an enemy. Now when the church of God in scripture is spoken of under the metaphor of a city or camp; then are ministers considered as watchmen set to defend it, as Ezekiel was of old. Upon which account the apostle exhorts you, to "obey them that have the rule over you, because they watch for your souls as they that must give an account." Though, at the same time, their being said to watch for mens souls, has an allusion also to shepherds watching their flocks, who must be accountable to the master and owner, in case any of the sheep be lost through carelessness or unfaithfulness. In which respect it is, that ministers are considered as inferior or under-shepherds; Christ himself being the chief shepherd,

shepherd, bishop or overseer of souls. And indeed he is the only archbishop, or bishop of bishops, overseers or pastors, that the sacred oracles are acquainted with, whatever splutter and noise some men make to the contrary.

4thly, Ministers of the gospel are also known in scripture, by the name of labourers or workmen. For they labour in God's vineyard, and Christ's harvest, and in the faithful discharge of this service, are looked upon to be workmen worthy of their hire.

Therefore, we are called to approve ourselves to be workmen, rightly dividing the word of God, that so we need not be ashamed. Now seeing a great part of the ministers work lies in his dividing the word of God aright; we are to enquire how we are to discharge this great duty. And as to this, I shall give you no other comment than the apostle's own, where he divides the word into four parts. The first is the word of doctrine, which consists in the explication of the truths of God, in order to enlighten the mind, and instruct the soul in the true and sound principles and doctrines of religion. 2. The word of reproof, i. e. serious and faithful warning as to sin and its effects and charging home the guilt of it on the consciences of offenders, with threatnings in case they do not repent and amend. 3. The word of correction, i. e. the exercise of church discipline, in case of heresy or scandals, by excluding them from the society as to the participation of the spiritual communion of the same. And fourth, The word of instruction, i. e. either as to matters of indispensable practice, or such things as circumstances make for. To which head we may also refer the resolution of doubts and cases of conscience, as these may occur.

Now from all these considerations thus laid together, suppose it will easily appear, how great and difficult a

work this of the ministry is. And, therefore, let this suffice for an answer to our first inquiry.

II. I N Q U I R Y.

How insufficient ministers are of themselves for this great work.

I have in a great measure prevented my self already, as to this, by what I have said upon the former head. For all and every part of the ministerial office be so difficult; and if this be a complex one made up of many, then it will plainly appear to be very hard for such poor creatures as we are: And consequently we cannot but look upon ourselves as insufficient to discharge aright so sacred an embassy from God to men, and so great a stewardship of the gospel-truths and ordinances; accompanied with such watching over the church and the souls of men, and with such labours and pains, in the harvest and vineyard of our Lord. Alas? who is sufficient for all these things?

But there are other considerations still which demonstrate mens insufficiency this way further, *viz.* the consideration of the author of this work, of the qualifications required in the persons discharging it, the hinderances that are in the way of performing it, and the end and design thereof.

And 1st, how insufficient men are of themselves for this great work, appears from its author, God himself, who is the instituter of it in a more special manner than of other offices. Whatever controversies have been about church-government and church-officers, as to their number and quality or imparity: Yet all agree that preaching ministers, the general notion of them, i. e. such as take the oversight of congregations upon them, are *jure divino*. A bishop

shop or overseer in this sense is as plainly appointed in scripture, as any thing can be. And none but atheists and anti-scripturists ever denied it.

Now can it be easy to serve the great king of heaven in so sacred an office, and in so immediate a way? Let what I have already said be impartially considered, and then it will easily appear that it is one of the most weighty and momentous employments that ever were, to serve the great God in such great concerns, as those of religion and the souls of men are.

2dly, How insufficient men are of themselves for this work, appears from the qualifications that such persons ought to be possessed of, in order to be capacitated rightly to discharge it. For besides gifts natural and acquired spiritual and supernatural ones are also necessary. Now all the qualifications necessary to make a minister complete and fit him for his work, that he may abound and be successful in it, may be reduced to three, viz. knowledge, eloquence, and prudence.

1. A minister must be eminent for knowledge. He must be enriched by Christ, as the apostle speaks, in all the knowledge of his word, and in all knowledge relating to the right understanding of it. Now if this be required in all Christians in some measure, then surely much more ought ministers to be enriched this way, who are to teach and instruct others. An ignorant minister is a shame and scandal to this sacred office. And, therefore, every one must study the scriptures carefully, and whatever else is requisite to lead him into the genuine and full understanding of the things that are there revealed. For which end he must earnestly beg the divine spirit to be led into all truth. And in order to know the truths of God, he must not only preach them but live them. For he that doth the

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of our heavenly father, as our Lord assures us, shall know the doctrine whether it be indeed of God or not.

2. A minister must not only have the gift of knowledge, but that of elocution also. He must speak as the oracles of God, and with boldness as the ambassador of God. For he must be capacitated to make known to others what he knows himself. He must therefore have an edifying gift both of prayer and preaching, and know also how to speak to edification in private conferences; for the apostle determines, that the greatest of all gifts is that of prophesying; and that, therefore, he had rather speak five words, so as to teach and edify others, than ten thousand in an unknown language. But it is not enough to have the utterance of words, unless he hath that of deeds also. He must therefore speak in his life and actions, as well as by his discourses. And that his conversation may be speaking, he must study holiness and purity, gravity and solidity, sweetness and sociableness; that he may this way, if possible, recommend religion; that his light shining thus before men, they may also be brought to glorify God. But if we would see more of the qualifications of a minister, in relation to this particular, let us read what the apostle says in his epistles to Timothy and Titus.

3. A minister must not only study to excel in knowledge and in utterance, but in prudence also. For this is no less useful to him in private, than the other qualifications are in public; that I say, not also that this is equally useful to direct in public matters, as in private ones. But this is so known to all that are not unacquainted with the world, that I need not insist further upon it. Though if any can possibly doubt of it, they may be satisfied from the next head. Therefore,

3dly, The insufficiency of ministers for this great work appears from the many lets and hinderances, that they have

have to struggle with in the discharge thereof. They have their own ignorance and weakness to bear up against; yea their lusts and corruptions too. And, besides these, and Satan himself together with his temptations, they have enemies without, such as atheists, achrists (as I may justly call them rather than deists) scoffers, sceptics, sadducees, heretics, seducers, calumniators, and persecutors. And they have enemies within also, even among the people they are concerned with. For sometimes they have to deal with those that are factious and turbulent, as well as with those that are quiet and peaceable: Sometimes with the presumptuous and conceited, as well as with the humble and modest: Sometimes with the scandalous and debauched, as well as with holy and circumspect persons: and sometimes with melancholy and despairing souls, as well as with the chearful ones, and such as live in the joyful hope of eternal salvation. And, besides all this, how difficult is it to carry aright with persons of high and low degree, and with the learned and ignorant; and to know when it is fit to be a Boanerges, and when a son of consolation? Is it easy to overcome the carnal reasons of some men, the fears and doubts of others, the opposition of enemies, and the stupidity and sensuality of many hearers? And are not the lusts, the prejudices, and the humours and passions of men difficult to overcome? Especially if we consider that, besides all these things, and the emulations of some and jealousies of others, which we must encounter with, faithful ministers have a double measure of afflictions to expect above other Christians. For, though there were some things peculiar to the apostle Paul, above what we can suppose will be literally fulfilled in us: Yet seeing he tells us, that Christ intended to make him an example of all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting; we

have

have reason, at least, to consider seriously, what he met with, in the faithful discharge of his ministry ; I have been, says he, in labours more abundant than most men ; in stripes above measure ; in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft ; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeying oft, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness ; besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches, &c. For, whatever particularities might be in the apostle Paul's case above others ; yet we are to remember, that this was the lot of the apostles in general, to be exposed to all manner of afflictions. For, says the same inspired writer, I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and men ; we are reckoned fools for Christ's sake, and weak, and despised ; even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labour with our own hands. Being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we intreat. We are made as the filth of the world, of all things unto this day. In all which respects, as the apostle says elsewhere, we approve ourselves to be the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, &c. Therefore the apostle James exhorts us, to take his brethren the prophets, as an example of suffering affliction and patience.

And as it was with the apostles, so it was also with the saints and most eminent ministers in all ages since, for the most part; for which I refer you to the histories of the church both antient and modern.

4^{ly}, The insufficiency of ministers appears also, from the consideration of the end and design of their ministry, for the promoting and carrying on of which they are sent; which is a complex one, and made up of these three, viz. God's glory, the civilizing of the world, and the salvation of men. Now how difficult a matter is it, to accomplish all these, yea or any of them? How hard a matter is it to make the glory of God shine forth in a dark world, or indeed in any part of it? And is it any easy matter, to civilize nations, and remove the savageness and barbarity that many men are under? And how hard a work is it to convert souls to soften the flinty heart, and renew men's spirits? And yet these are the ends of the ministry, how difficult, or impossible rather, without God's special assistance, they may seem to be? For, as the apostle says, the ministerial office, including both the first extraordinary and the subsequent ordinary office-bearers, is designed for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Now from all these considerations, as additional to those I mentioned under the former inquiry, it may sufficiently appear, how hard and difficult the work of a minister is. And, therefore, we may conclude this part of our discourse with the paraphrase of an antient writer on the apostle's words, that he that desireth the office of a bishop or overseer, desireth a good work. Yes, says he, a good work it is, but it is an hard work too. For it is a work not a duty, a work not a pleasure, a work which will teach us

sink in humility, and not to swell with pride. A saying worthy of the serious thoughts of all men, but especially of the ministers of Christ.

III. INQUIRY.

In what respects ministers, notwithstanding their own insufficiency, are rendered fit and qualified for this work through the sufficiency that God endues them with. Or wherein doth our sufficiency this way, which is of God, stand.

To this I answer, that as in other cases, so in this, we may truly say, if God be for us, we need not be concerned what or who is against us. He who is self-sufficient, is surely all-sufficient for his servants, who trust in him and depend upon him. Therefore, he can easily enable us to surmount and overcome all the difficulties we can be supposed to meet with, in the exercise of the sacred office to which he has called us. And surely we have reason to expect his assistance from our Lord's promise, which though it does more immediately relate to the apostles, yet does certainly include all those that were to be called to succeed them in their ordinary work, as the extent of the expression does plainly intimate, when he says; And lo I am with you even to the end of the world.

And, therefore, this one promise contains a full answer to all the things wherein the insufficiency of ministers doth stand; as we may easily see, by running over the things I have mentioned under the preceding propositions.

For, 1st, it is easy from hence to find an answer to all those things I hinted under the first proposition. For, though the work of the ministry be indeed very difficult,

and enough to fright serious persons, and sink them under the weight of such a complex office: Yet this is fully answered by this one consideration, that the work is not so much ours as God's; and that therefore he is more concerned to carry it on than we can possibly be. Is the work God's? let us then be assured, that he will not stand by as an unconcerned spectator, and see us tug at it alone, without giving us his helping hand, and assisting us in our sincere and honest attempts to perform the same.

And, *2dly*, we may hence also see an answer to all we suggested under the second proposition. For 1. If the author of this office be matter of terror in one respect, so also ground of encouragement in another. For we certainly conclude from hence, that so good and kind a master will not send his servants on a warfare upon their own charges. 2. And though the qualifications that must concur to make a man an able minister, be many and great; yet he can easily make us so. If he call us to this work, he will fit us for it. It was by him that fishermen were made apostles. And it is by him that we must come to be made able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit; for it is he only that enricheth his servants in all those gifts and graces they stand in need of. 3. It is true indeed, the lets and hinderances in the way of a minister, as to the faithful discharge of his work, are many: But how easily can God carry us through and above all these? if he be with us, there are more for us than against us. He can send a Moses only with a rod to force a proud Pharaoh and his whole kingdom to own a God; and in case of his attempt to cut off the people of God by armies, he can bring the waves of the sea to destroy him and them. He can blow down the strong walls of Jericho with the sound of rams horns, and make Gideon's three hundred water-lepers to defeat the vast Midian

armies

armies with the sound of trumpets and breaking of pitchers. If God send forth a Jeremiah, or any else, upon any special service, he can make him as a defended city, an iron pillar and brazen wall, against whom all the princes, priests, and people may fight, and not be able to prevail. And if he raise up a Paul, an Athanasius, or a Luther, he can make him carry on a reformation in spite of all opposition. Therefore let us comfort ourselves with this, that our God is able to make us stand, though we be never so weak of ourselves for our great work; nay with this also, that he will not desert us in our work, if he do indeed call us to it. And, 4. Though the end of the ministerial work, being the glory of God and the good of men, be indeed too great for us to reach, if left to ourselves; yet the same argument holds here also. For it is the same thing with God to work with many or with few, with strong or weak instruments. He did therefore think Gideon's army too many to save Israel by, till he had reduced them to a handful. For he takes pleasure often to work by the weakest vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he brings forth strength. Nay he frequently brings down the high and mighty by things that are small and despised. For his grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made manifest in our weakness, that no flesh may glory in his presence.

And thus we see, how God can make weak and poor creatures sufficient for this great and difficult work, and successful in carrying it on notwithstanding all difficulties. So that I hope by this time, we understand how the apostle is to be understood, in his answering in the latter of our texts, what he suggested to himself as an objection in the first of them. So that I have no more to trouble you with, as to the explication of the words I read unto you.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

But I hope ye will bear with me, in making some improvement of what I have said. For which end let me tell you that this doctrine has a voice to three sorts of persons, which will take in all of us here: For it speaks, 1. To us who are ministers: 2. To other church-officers who are to assist us for the good of the congregation. And, 3. To all Christians whatsoever, especially such as are actual members of the church.

And, 1st, the things I have already considered as to the ministerial office and work, teach us our duty, who are ministers of the gospel. And there are four uses we are to make of this doctrine.

The 1st use is, that we learn hence, to live within sight of ourselves, of our weakness and insufficiency this way. Surely the sense of the greatness of our weakness and our own unfitness for it, is enough to keep us humble all our days: and may justly oblige us to walk softly and humbly with our God, yea and perhaps frequently to be in heaviness of soul, considering our many frailties and shortcomings this way. How awful and awakening a consideration is it, to think, that we endanger our own souls by being in any thing unfaithful to the souls of others, that are someway under our charge? the sense of which has ever been matter of the most serious and deep concern to the best of ministers in all times: though none whose works I have read seem to have been more under the constant impressions of it than Chrysostom of old; who seems to question the salvation of a great many ministers on this head. O therefore, what reason have we to walk seriously, circumspectly and humbly before God, in the discharge of this weighty and momentous service and work.

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The 2d use is, that we learn henceforth to trust in and depend upon our gracious God more and more, that through his all-sufficiency we may be capacitated to perform this work aright, and that the hardest and most difficult parts of it may be thus made easy and sweet to us. If God give wisdom liberally to all them that ask, how much more to us that need so much thereof, considering how many things we have to do, and how perplexing, our circumstances frequently are? Therefore, it is the duty of all, but more especially of ministers, to live closely and constantly with God, that their need may be abundantly supplied in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that we may be able to say, with the apostle, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

The 3d use is, that in order to the better discharging and performing the duties of this great office, we that are ministers do set before us those things which God does in a most special and peculiar manner require of us.

And in order to this, I shall adventure to propose the character of a true gospel-minister; which, though it may justly make me ashamed when I view myself in this glass, may yet be of use to incite both me and others to labour what we can, to come as near this pattern as it is possible for us to do through the gracious assistance of our glorious God and Saviour. If then ye would know what a minister of the gospel of Christ should be (for I am afraid there are but very few, that actually attain to live up to the rule in this way, as they ought) I shall sum up my thoughts and idea of him here in as few but comprehensive words as possibly I can.

“A true gospel-minister is one, who is, through grace, and by education and diligence, qualified, in some measure, for his great work, and is therefore studious to be, and act as a man, scholar and Christian; that he

“may

“ may become an able minister of the new testament. He
 “ is a man as to a sufficient measure of gifts natural, a
 “ scholar as to gifts acquired by study and pains, and a
 “ Christian as to grace, experience and piety.

“ Yet he takes not upon him the ministerial office of
 “ himself, but looks up to God both for his inward and
 “ outward providential call; and in order to full satisfac-
 “ tion this way, submits himself to those whose work it is
 “ to try, examine, ordain, and send forth others to serve
 “ Christ in the gospel. For he knows that none ought to
 “ take upon him this sacred office, but he that is called to
 “ it as Aaron was: since even Christ honoured not him-
 “ self, so as to run without being sent, but was faithful to
 “ him that appointed him.

“ He undertakes not this holy work for wordly or secu-
 “ lar ends, but in order to promote the great purposes of
 “ the gospel of Christ, that God may be honoured in the
 “ conversion, sanctification, and salvation of precious and
 “ immortal souls.

“ Therefore, he makes not a popular applause, his scope
 “ and design, as remembering that his Saviour has told
 “ him, that it is he only that speaketh of himself, and that is
 “ beneath or of this earth, (*i. e.* one who is actuated merely
 “ from wordly principles), and that seeketh his own ho-
 “ nour. And therefore, he is careful to imitate the apos-
 “ tle, who speaks the inward sense of all faithful ministers,
 “ as well as his own, when he says, we preach not our-
 “ selves, but Christ the Lord, and ourselves your servants
 “ for his sake.

“ And hence, likewise it is, that he dare not make filthy
 “ lucre his end, nor have men or women persons in admini-
 “ stration because of advantage; nor doth he affect to lord
 “ it over Christ's heritage, nor yet to have preeminence

“ above

“above the rest of his brethren, who are set in the equality of office and power within himself.

“He is one who labours in the word and doctrine, rightly dividing the truth of God, according as the state of his flock requires his accommodating and applying the same. In all which, he considers the worth of souls, and the danger they are in of being lost, and the account he is to give to his great Lord and master, how he hath behaved himself in his stewardship, and the service of his Lord.

“He feareth not the face of any man in the discharge of his office, and will not, out of fear or servile compliance, balk any truth or duty, or cease to reprove sin, as reckoning that he ought to obey God rather than men.

“He is very sensible of his own weaknesses in the performance of his work: and, therefore, as he doth earnestly beg for the divine assistance, and humbly wait for it, in order to the right discharge of the several parts of his trust; so, in his being enabled to do any thing for God and mens salvation this way, he ascribes the whole glory to God and Christ.

“He reckons that his business is to make men more knowing and more holy; and, therefore, is careful to bring them over to the true knowledge of God and Christ, and to the principles and practice of our holy religion, rather than to a party or disputable opinion, to uphold and promote a private interest. He is therefore more concerned about the essentials, than the circumstantial of truth, as being loath to have Christians taken up so much about little matters, while the one thing necessary lies neglected.

“Therefore, he makes no more things necessary to salvation, than Christ has made, nor teacheth for doctrines
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“Therefore, he makes no more things necessary to salvation, than Christ has made, nor teacheth for doctrines

“of

" of God the commandments of men. And as hence; he
 " charitably judgeth of, and bears with those that differ
 " from him in lesser matters : so he leans not so much to
 " his own understanding, as to be over-dogmatical and po-
 " sitive, in things not so plainly revealed, as to necessitate
 " the assent of men this or the other way. But if he do dis-
 " sent from the generality of his brethren in any thing, he
 " does it not out of faction or conceitedness, but from
 " real dissatisfaction in point of reason or conscience. A-
 " bout which, notwithstanding he raises no clamor, to the
 " hazarding of the public peace, nor judgeth of himself
 " more highly than he ought; but is careful to observe
 " the apostle's advice, " To walk with others so far as he
 " has attained by the same common rule, and to mind the
 " the same things, that so what they and he differ in, may
 " be discovered to both in God's good time and way.

" Being conscious to himself of a sincere and honest be-
 " lief in all that he does, he lives above the censures and
 " reproaches of others. For though he is careful to re-
 " commend himself to the consciences of all men in well
 " doing; yet where men allow themselves to censure him
 " unjustly or uncharitably, from prejudice, passion, or
 " partiality, he values such sufferings little, seeing he has
 " the testimony of a good conscience to comfort him, and
 " is assured of his master's approbation. And if some
 " foolish and unreasonable men despise his office as a mis-
 " nister, he is not a whit the more ashamed of the doctrine
 " of Christ, but magnifies his office.

" He rejoiceth with Paul, that Christ is preached, and
 " the design of Christianity carried on by whatever instru-
 " ments. And, therefore, envies not the success of any
 " man in this good work, nor his acceptableness with the
 " people, though it should be much more than he himself
 " is blessed with. And far less is he for silencing the

“that God makes use of for the good of men, because they
“differ from him in many things; for he remembers the
“sage answer of the great Moses to the over-zealous
“charge of Joshua against Eldad and Medad, because they
“prophefied in the camp without commission from him :
“Enviest thou for my sake ? says Moses, would to God
“that all the Lord’s people were prophets, so he might
“but put his spirit upon them. And he remembers also,
“that our blessed Saviour checked his apostles, for forbid-
“ding a man to cast out devils in his name, only because
“he followed not them : for, says Christ, he that is not
“against us, is for us, and on our part.

“His pulpit gesture and speech is not antic, mimical,
“affected ; but he carries, looks, speaks there, as becomes
“the Majesty of God, in whose name he speaks, and the
“oracles of God, whose message he brings. Therefore,
“as his presence is made up of gravity, seriousness, and
“sweetness : so his language is neither scurrilous and mean,
“nor made up of luscious rhetoric, and nauseous bombast ;
“but his words are plain and native, acceptable and cho-
“sen, powerful and attractive.

“He ceaseth not to be a minister when he is out of the
“pulpit ; but carries himself in all his conversation, holily
“and religiously, walking thus humbly with his God,
“righteously toward men, mercifully to the poor, and so-
“berly in the use of the creature. For he is conscientiously
“concerned to practise himself what he preacheth to others,
“exemplifying his doctrine thus in his life and conversa-
“tion, that others may see there is a truth in Christianity,
“and may be brought in word and deed themselves also
“to glorify God.

“He looks upon himself as obliged to act the more as
“a gentleman, that he is a minister. And therefore, is
“not morose or stoical in his conversation, but of a sweet
“and

“ and winning carriage (without being guilty of a sordid
 “ fawning upon any man, or a base complying with all
 “ their humours.) For he prefers the character of the
 “ blessed Jesus, before that of his forerunner the Baptist;
 “ which favoured of the spirit of the old testament, as our
 “ Lord’s was a perfect pattern of the new. Therefore,
 “ whereas John came neither eating or drinking, Christ
 “ acted quite otherwise: that is, whereas John came and
 “ spake to men, in a rigid, authoritative and reserved
 “ manner, Christ came in a friendly, ingaging and sociable
 “ way, mixing, attractive, gentleness and sweetness, with
 “ awful miracles, powerful sermons, a majestic presence,
 “ and the greatest purity, and strictest holiness of life.

“ Therefore, though he is no respecter of persons, in an
 “ ill sense, nor thinks the meanest person of his church be-
 “ neath his care and serious concern: yet he is observant
 “ of the characters that men bear in the world, and the
 “ stations God has placed them in his providence; and
 “ renders honour to whom honour is due, and obedience
 “ to whom obedience belongs.

“ Love to, and admiration of the oracles of God, grows
 “ up with him, as he grows in knowledge, grace and expe-
 “ rience. And therefore, though he make a right use of
 “ other books and helps, in order to the cultivation of his
 “ mind, as to the truths of religion: yet still he believes
 “ nothing as such, but what he finds contained in his bible;
 “ which he therefore studies as his only system or body of
 “ divinity. For he calls none father of his faith but God,
 “ nor any man Rabbi or teacher of his religion but Christ.

“ He is not given to contention, is not soon angry, or
 “ easily put out of due temper and frame, is no railer
 “ or striker, nor any promoter of faction, sedition, or strife;
 “ but he ever prefers the public good before his private
 “ emoluments, or interest, or honour; and with meekness

“ of

of wisdom instructeth and convinceth them that oppose themselves, making himself thus all things to all men, as to their judgment and conscience, not humour or biases, for their good and advantage.

“He finds work enough in his closet and pulpit, and among his people, without intermeddling in others mens affairs, or travelling from place to place, or street to street, as a busy body, in things that concern him not. And therefore, he goes not beyond his sphere, by meddling with what relates to the polity and business of the civil magistrate.

“His zeal for religion is regulated by knowledge and moderation in the exercise of it: And, therefore, he is not of so hot and furious a disposition, as to wish fire to fall down from heaven, and destroy all that do not immediately receive Christ, and obey the gospel. Far less is he for persecuting Christians of different denominations from himself, or for stirring up the magistrate to do so. But he imitates the peaceable example of the blessed and holy Jesus, and says of persons of this persecuting disposition, that they know not what spirit they are of. For his worst wish to his most inveterate enemies is, Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

“And yet, though no Roman Catholic, he is a man of a Catholic spirit, and has respect to the interest of religion as he has occasion beyond the limits of his own particular flock; as knowing he is a minister of the universal church, whatever be his ties to a particular special congregation.

“Therefore the care of all the churches lies upon his spirit, with a deep and serious impression. Whence, as he sympathizeth with the state of the church of God every where, so as to be willing to be offered up for the

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“ good of the brethren, if called to it : so he has a tender
 “ regard of every particular member of Christ’s body, re-
 “ joicing with them that do rejoice, and mourning with
 “ them that mourn.

“ In short, whatever his infirmities be, he is careful to
 “ walk with God, as one that has devoted himself wholly
 “ to his service both as a minister and Christian. And
 “ therefore, he acts from religious principles, for holy
 “ ends, according to the rule of God’s word, and in a de-
 “ pendance upon him, as to the main of his life whether
 “ in private or public : as considering that he is in the pre-
 “ sence of an all-seeing God, and must give an account to
 “ Christ at the great day, how he has discharged his mes-
 “ sage, improved his talents, performed his office, and as-
 “ sed for the glory of God and the salvation and good of
 “ the souls under his charge.

“ This is the character of a true and faithful minister
 “ Christ, as to some of the main strokes, towards the draw-
 “ ing of his picture. Which, though imperfect, as done
 “ by me, may yet serve to incite and animate all serious
 “ ministers to a more diligent and faithful discharge of
 “ their great work.

But there is yet a 4th use that I would have us minis-
 ters make of what I said before, *viz.* seeing the work is so
 great and difficult in itself, and we so insufficient for it,
 that therefore, we do solemnly dedicate ourselves to God
 and enter into covenant with him as explicitly as we can
 in order to be assisted by him, as we are his servants in the
 work of the ministry of our Lord.

But seeing I apprehend this proposal will found harsh in
 the ears of most persons, and that it may surprise almost
 every body, seeing I confess I never read or heard of it
 before ; I find myself obliged to let the world know what
 my meaning and design is, in what I have hinted.

I hope, it is beyond dispute with all understanding and serious Christians, that in order to be saved, we are obliged to accept of Christ as our saviour and master, according to the gospel-offer and the terms of it. And to do so, as I am sure to covenant and engage with him as really, though in a spiritual sense and mental way, as he does, who binds himself apprentice or servant to a master.

Now it was ever reckoned an excellency in all contracts and agreements, that the parties contracting should be as express, explicit and formal in the articles they agree upon, and in the binding one another to the performance of their several parts, as possibly or reasonably can be done.

Upon these plain suppositions some of our best practical divines have proceeded; when they exhorted Christians to a formal stipulation, this way, with God in Christ. Some of whom have given us a form of contract, for a directory or model, (See Mr Guthry's trial of a saving interest in Christ, and Mr Allen's call to the unconverted,) to regulate us in the discharge of our duty aright, in relation to so great and awful a transaction.

And indeed we will cease to censure them, and the many thousands that have received good by following their advice: if we consider the reasons that may be offered for this practice. For besides what I hinted just now, that the nature of the duty calls for this, and that we are to be exact in this affair if in any; we may remember what a copy God has cast us this way in his carriage to us. For what proclamation or manifesto can be more plain, positive, full and express, than that of the gospel is? and has he not in this told us our duty, as well as what he will do for us? shall we then reckon it a virtue, to be irresolute and indistinct, in what we do or engage to do, to our God; when he is so distinct and positive not only in what he has

promised

promised to do, but in what he expects us to do on our part.

I shall not take notice of the covenant that was between God and Israel of old, nor of the several solemn renewations of it afterwards; because we are speaking of private and secret covenanting with God. Though we might perhaps argue even from hence, for what I now plead for. For whatever were the peculiar circumstances of that ancient people, which cannot perhaps in all things agree with other nations; yet sure every man is master of himself, and may therefore bind himself to what superior he pleaseth, and that with what formality he sees good. And is it then unlawful that I should dedicate myself to my God, by formal stipulation, who am under so many ties to do so?

May we not, if we please vow to God then? May we not enter formally and expressly into covenant with him? That from that time, we may upon special ground say, in obedience to our Lord; "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." For he will then say of us, that we are his people, and allow us to say to him, Thou art our God. For God tells us, that in the New Testament times, "One should say I am the Lord's, and another call himself by the name of Jacob, and another subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

But I must not run out too far this way. One thing only I would add, that it cannot but be useful and beneficial, thus to give up ourselves first to God, and then to the church. For besides that it stirs us up to duty, it is matter of encouragement to us, when we are under fears and perplexities; as giving us ground of hope, that he whom we have so solemnly avouched to be our Lord, whose we are, and whom we serve, will never altogether leave us nor forsake us.

For which reason, as it is our duty to enter thus into covenant with God, so also to renew it at certain times. For, though every act of devotion be a virtual renovation of this; yet we ought to do it more solemnly at certain times, as at or before we partake of the Lord's Supper, or when we are under eminent dangers. Besides that every one may have some annual day, that he may think proper to dedicate in whole or in part this way; such as the day of ones birth or baptism, or the first day of the year, or any other remarkable day or time. For that there is good reason that we should renew our covenant with God, as well as enter into it, appears plainly enough to any that will consider, how soon lively impressions of God and Christ are apt to wear off the soul, and that this is a good method to maintain them. Besides, that this will be an excellent mean also to strengthen faith, and increase joy, and to quicken us to the right discharge of all spiritual duties; as considering that we have thus bored our ears, if I may so, to Christ's door, never more to leave off his service.

Now these things being considered, I come to that which I do more directly aim at in this use, viz. that ministers as such are obliged to engage themselves thus solemnly to the Lord. For they are under a double relation to God, viz. both as they are Christians, and as they act to the church, in the name of God and Christ, in a public capacity.

For the very nature of the ministerial work imports or supposes an agreement between us and him, whose ministers and servants we are. If our ministry be considered as a service, then surely it is no way alien from it, that we be express and distinct in engaging ourselves to the service of our blessed master. And is not this very thing solemnly done by ministers when they are ordained? For I hope

we do not then engage to be the servants of men but of God. Or if we consider our ministry as a trust, still the same thing is included in it; whether we consider it as a trust of truth, to propagate and defend it; or as a trust of souls, to assist, edify, and comfort them. For if it be a trust, it cannot be hurtful to us, to be express and explicit in our engaging ourselves to it. For though God know our thoughts, and stand in need of no indications besides to know them; yet with respect to us, this way is necessary for the better discharging of this sacred office. For though he know our wants, and therefore need not that we pray with earnestness for his gracious assistance, as if we could inform him of our wants, or influence him by our arguments; yet he who knows our frame and circumstances, obligeth us to pray and wrestle with him in prayer, in order to obtain our suits, as if the case were indeed thus; for it is the fervent prayer of a righteous man that is effectual and availeth much. Now what mean all these names that ministers go under in scripture, when they are called servants, stewards, overseers, elders, ministers, watchmen, pastors, teachers, ambassadors, &c. Ought not a man, that is so variously related to God, be as distinct to his great master in engaging himself to the performance of this great work, as he ought to be explicit and plain to men, in his entering upon it outwardly to them?

And though Moses and Aaron, Samuel, Jeremiah, and the other prophets and the apostles, had all of them extraordinary calls to their several ministrations; yet the accounts we have of their several calls this way, do all of them suppose something of this kind in the general, by way of stipulation, as that which the relation of master and servant doth necessarily involve; though the way of

their call and mission cannot now be drawn into a precedent.

All these things, therefore, being considered, I have often wondered that none of all our divines, (at least that I have heard of), has ever taken notice of any thing relating to the ministerial covenant, even such of them as have been most earnest to promote the design of the former.

And therefore, I should not have mentioned this neither, did I not hope that the starting of it may be of some use to revive the power of Godliness among ministers, and consequently, among private Christians also. For would not a solemn and serious dedication of ourselves to God, be of great service this way?

It is not for me to say more upon this subject at this time. Every one must act as he is fully persuaded in his own mind. And where an implicit assent and consent to a thing is given, there I know the essence of a covenant is. I do not therefore plead for the absolute necessity of a more formal, explicit, and express covenanting with God; but only for the conveniency and profitableness of it. For would not this keep our spirits under more awful and serious thoughts of God, and excite us to mind the ministry, otherwise than as a trade or preferment, as some, and I am afraid too many do, to the scandal of Christianity, and the danger, yea ruin frequently of their own and other mens souls?

What if then I venture to propose a form of such a contract here, to the students of divinity, and those that are probationers and candidates of the ministry; which every one may alter or change, as he finds to agree with his case and circumstances most, or compose another instead of this, if it please not some.

When therefore any such person is fully convinced in his own mind, of the lawfulness and expediency of acting thus

thus, in dedicating himself solemnly to God, both as a Christian and minister; let him set some time apart to be spent this way in some close retirement. And after preliminary considerations of the greatness of God, and the weight of the thing he is about; let him prostrate himself before the Divine Majesty; where, after imploring his presence and acceptance, let him seriously, judiciously, believingly, and humbly, with firm resolutions of obedience, dedicate himself to his great master, in these or the like words.

"O Lord, my God, I come at this time with all humility, and in the most serious and solemn manner I am capable of, to dedicate, consecrate, and devote myself to thee; beseeching thee to pardon whatever weakness or imperfection I may be guilty of in this performance, and to accept the breathings of a poor soul, who longs to be more and more thine, to know thee, to converse with thee, and to enjoy thee further.

"And first, as I am a Christian, I offer up myself to thee wholly and for ever. And as I have formerly accepted of the call of thy gospel, and consented to the terms thereof, so I do now most solemnly declare, that I do so with all my heart and soul. I make choice of thee, therefore, to be my only God and portion. I yield myself wholly to Christ, as my only and complete Redeemer and Saviour, and as my great and kind Master and Sovereign; I trust to his merits only for salvation, both initiate, progressive, and consummate. I accept of him in all his offices, as he is made of God to his people, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I take the Holy Spirit, and submit unto him as my sanctifier, comforter, persuader, and assister in prayer and all good works; and do humbly beg for his influences in all these respects. I have chosen thy will

“as my heritage for ever. The truths thereof, as the
“matter of my meditation; its promises as my security
“and encouragement; and its commands as the rule of
“my life and practice, without any sinful reserve or par-
“tiality, being resolved to yield an entire obedience even
“to such precepts as seem most severe to flesh and blood,
“and to such as strike most against those sins I am natu-
“rally most inclinable or liable to, being concerned thus
“to deny myself, take up my cross and follow my mas-
“ter, even though I be obliged to lose all things here be-
“low in doing so.

“And next, as I am a minister, I desire and resolve thro’
thy grace, to be faithful and true to him that sent me.
I am resolved, therefore, to search after divine truth,
and the right sense and scope of scripture, diligently
and impartially, without respect to education or party.
My design is to declare, as far as I am able, the whole
counsel of God; yet principally to teach and preach
those things that tend most to edification. I shall en-
deavour faithfully to watch over the souls of those com-
mitted to my trust, by directing, exhorting, reproving,
encouraging and comforting them as their cases and cir-
cumstances may require. I shall make it my study to
behave towards persons of all sorts, with what prudence
I am master of, and to walk holy and humbly in all
things, by spending my time, and improving the talents
and opportunities thou art pleased to afford me, to the
best advantage I can. In all which I shall ever design
thy honour, the credit of my profession, the benefit of
the public, the good of souls, the edification of those
that are without, and the purity and peace of my own
conscience before thee, without any unwarrantable re-
spect to my private honour or interest in this world.

“But

" But now, O Lord, as I take thee to be witness of my
 " sincere design and intention to act this way to thee and
 " men, so I do declare, that it is not from any presump-
 " tion of my own strength or ability, that I give thee this
 " solemn declaration of acting as thy servant. For thou
 " that knowest all things dost testify, together with my
 " conscience, that my end in this is, to lay myself under
 " the strongest and most binding ties and obligations I
 " possibly can, in order rightly and faithfully to discharge
 " the work and service thou hast intrusted me with, both
 " as I am a Christian and minister, in hope that thou wilt
 " accept of me, and be assisting unto me at all times, and
 " in every thing; that I may experience thy constant and
 " uniform care over me, as my Father and benefactor,
 " and my Lord and Master. For which end I do hum-
 " bly and earnestly implore thy hearing and accepting
 " what I have further to lay before the throne of thy
 " grace at this time.

" Seeing, therefore, O my God, I claim a relation to
 " thee through Christ, as I am a Christian; and seeing
 " thou hast this way raised my expectations as well as de-
 " fires, by thy great mercy and thy rich promises; I make
 " bold (in obedience to thy command, and in compliance
 " with thy will) humbly to demand that I may ever be
 " the object of the one, and experience the fulfilling of
 " the other, as thou seekest most fit for me. I do therefore
 " venture to lay claim to thy pardoning mercy and sanctify-
 " ing grace. I expect thy protection from enemies of all
 " sorts. For lo! I do avouch thee this day as my God
 " to be to me instead of all relatives, my Sovereign, my
 " Judge, my Physician, my Shepherd, and my true and
 " best friend. I cannot therefore question after this, but
 " thy perfections shall be forthcoming to me, according to
 " the peculiar circumstances I am or may be under;

“that so I shall experience, that thy all-sufficiency is the
“lot of my inheritance, and thy eternity the date there-
“of; that thy omnipresence shall supply the want or de-
“fects of other company, thy unchangeableness be my
“fortress, thy omniscience my overseer, thy wisdom my
“counsellor, thy omnipotence my guard, thy mercies my
“store, thy goodness my consolation, thy justice, (satisfied
“in Christ), my rewarder, thy holiness a constant foun-
“tain of grace to me, and thy faithfulness my security
“in all these. In all which respects I hope and desire,
“that thou mayest be pleased to approve thyself to me,
“as my Father in thy tender affection, compassion, in-
“struction, protection, and provision, that Christ may
“please to evidence himself to be my Saviour, my Master,
“and my Advocate and Intercessor; and that the Holy
“Spirit may also take care of me as my counsellor, sanc-
“tifier, strengthener, and comforter; and consequently,
“that I may be blest with peace of conscience, joy in be-
“lieving, increase of grace, access to my God in prayer,
“and perseverance in the ways of God. And if thus thou
“bestow thyself on thy poor creature, may I not with
“thee expect all things besides? I shall therefore expect,
“that thou wilt not deny me such external mercies as I
“shall stand in need of, with respect to the comfortable
“discharge of all duties. Let me therefore have necessary
“and convenient supplies of creature-comforts; together
“with the protection of thy angels, and the co-operation
“of all thy providences for my good. And when thou
“shalt call me to leave this body, and remove from this
“earth; let me then be enabled to give an honourable
“testimony to thy way and work, and let an abundant
“entrance be granted me into the everlasting kingdom of
“my dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“But

" But since thou, O glorious and gracious Jehova, hast
 " allured me to thy gospel-work as an office-bearer in thy
 " house, and honoured me by putting me into the minist-
 " try ; I must on this account also humbly claim thy pro-
 " fence and assistance. That as I came into this work in
 " obedience to thy call, and resolve to continue in it thro'
 " thy grace ; so I may be assisted and encouraged there-
 " in. I shall therefore henceforth constantly beg and
 " humbly expect, that thou wilt command thy blessing up-
 " on me in my meditations and studies, that I may be
 " safely and clearly guided by thy spirit into all truth,
 " and kept from errors of all sorts. I beg strength both
 " of body and mind, for the work thou callest me to.
 " And when it lies heavier upon me at one time than ano-
 " ther, let thy grace be sufficient for me, and thy strength
 " made perfect in my weakness. I beg that my natural
 " parts may never fail me, and that my acquired parts
 " may still increase by a further addition of all necessary
 " learning. And let grace within be ever on the thriving
 " and growing hand, that though my outward man de-
 " cay, the inward man may be renewed day after day.
 " And as I desire to increase in all knowledge, so in all
 " utterance also ; that I may be enabled to pray spiritually
 " and to edification, and to preach as the oracles of God
 " freely and boldly, and to speak more privately also, to
 " the edification, conviction, and comfort of those I have
 " to do with. And particularly I humbly and earnestly
 " desire that I may not labour in vain, nor spend my spi-
 " rits and strength for nought, but that I may see (if it
 " be thy blessed will) many souls, convinced, converted,
 " enlightened, established, and comforted by my poor la-
 " bours in the work of the ministry. For which purpo-
 " ses, give me tenderness and bowels of compassion to poor
 " perishing

perishing souls ; and make me conscientious and faithful in all the parts of my work. And in sum, let me ever find thee enabling me to carry and walk, as becomes my character and trust, that I may in no respect be an occasion of offence to any, but may in all things adorn the gospel of Christ. But if I meet with unjust censures, reproaches or oppositions, in the faithful discharge of my ministry, or be persecuted otherwise by men, or meet with trials and afflictions in thy holy providence ; then I beg thy more special assistance and support, that as my day and hour of temptation is, strength may be proportionably imparted to me from thyself. In all which respects let me ever find that thou art with me always even to the end. Amen.

“ And now, O Lord, here is the covenant that I desire to make with thee. Pardon what is amiss in the composition as it flows from me, or in the frame of my mind in this solemn address to my glorious God ; and let me be enabled to do what I have now engaged myself to the performance of, and experience that thou dost indeed fulfil thy promises on thy part also. Do for me, in all these things, I beseech thee, above what I can either ask or think, for thy mercies sake, and thy Christ’s sake. Say, therefore, Amen, O my God, and seal this covenant and bargain, that it may be binding and perpetual. I question not but thou dost so, and wilt do so further for thy glory and my good. And in this faith, with all readiness and submission, I say, Amen, and Amen, and subscribe myself thine, thine wholly, thine for ever ; this present day, &c. in the year, &c.

Now I leave it to the impartial consideration of all serious Christians, and particularly ministers, whether there be any thing in what I have said here, that is inconsistent

with the gospel. For though this contract relates especially to ministers, yet every private Christian may make use of it, passing over that part that relates to ministers as such.

For my own part, I do humbly conceive that this might be of considerable use to all serious persons, if duly considered and improved. For supposing a devout soul, after engaging himself thus to cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart; as Barnabas exhorted those early disciples at Antioch, who were first honoured with the name of Christians, upon their following his advice: I say, supposing a Christian act thus, and annually, or oftner, renew this; surely we cannot but think that this will be exceedingly useful to him, to incite and encourage him in the ways of God, in order to grow in grace, holiness, and usefulness.

And in order to this, may it not be advisable, that such a person keep a private diary, that upon every annual renovation of this covenant, he may adjust and balance all occurrences for the year preceding; that so from past experiences he may be directed in his duty for the time to come.

But as we ought to be abstracted from all the world, in what passes between God and our own souls in secret; so in keeping a diary we ought to write in characters, or in such a manner as none may know what is there. For many honest and sincere, but weak persons, have been guilty of a great many impertinencies this way; which have been an occasion of stumbling to some, and matter of burlesque to profane wits.

And, therefore, great care must be taken in this also, that we fill not such a record with little minute things, or the effects of fancy and a warm imagination; but with such solid and considerable materials, as we are not only

sure

sure of, but judge to be of use in our after life, in order to the regulation of our thoughts or conversation. For God never required or expected any such thing of any man, that he should register every occurrence of his life this way. For such an attempt were to juggle out more necessary and important duties: And, therefore, upon this and many other accounts, is both unwarrantable and impertinent.

But besides this we must be very cautious, in drawing particular occurrences or experiences into rules, especially as to what we are to expect from God, in answer to prayer or otherwise. For he is a free agent, as well as our sovereign, and may act variously to us as he pleaseth.

And seeing we write and keep such records, for ourselves and our own use and not for others, I am altogether against printing any thing of this kind; seeing we have a sufficient directory in the word of God, which our experiences can add nothing unto, no more than popish traditions. And surely it would favour both of great pride and folly, if while I act according to my own sense and experience of things, and not another mans, I should see myself in such a monstrously magnifying glass as to imagine all mankind must quit their sense and experience, to allow of mine as the only perfect model.

But if any experience of ours may be of use to promote a public good, so that we find we must neglect that, if we publish not something of this kind; in that case, both modesty, humility, and prudence, will oblige us (whatever way we take to publish our thoughts this way) not only to conceal our names in print, but to speak in such a manner in the third person, that though the author were discovered, the person to whom this relates might still remain incognito, and continue wholly unknown.

After these hints, I leave the improvement of what I have said to every man's own thoughts and prudence; for

I confess myself to be altogether unable to direct as to particulars. And though I were, yet the last caution I have given, would stop my pen from running further on this head ; I proceed therefore to something else.

Therefore in the second place, as the doctrine I have considered, has a voice to ministers, so also to all those who are assisting to them as officers in the church.

And it is briefly this, That they would seriously consider the greatness of their own work also. For though they have not all or most of the work of the ministry upon them, yet they have some part of it : And it is no small or easy thing to perform the least duty of this kind aright. Sacred things ought to be performed in a very serious and holy manner, whether they relate to the souls or bodies of men, to the more essential or circumstantial affairs of the church : Therefore, says the apostle, let them that rule, do it with diligence ; and let them who distribute the churches stock and charity, do it with simplicity and chearfulness.

And seeing the minister's work is so very great and difficult, they ought to reckon it their duty to be assisting to them all they can with their best advice, and ready and hearty concurrence in all things that make for the public good of the church and society, and the private benefit of the particular members thereof, over which they are also, in their stations, appointed overseers : For they are helpers, or, as the apostle speaks, helps, both to the minister and the church, in as far as they are constituted by both to assist towards the good and peace of the community.

In the third and last place, the doctrine I have insisted upon, has a voice also to all Christians whatsoever, especially such as make up the congregation, in a strict and proper sense, as being members of it.

If ye say, what can this concern us who are private Christians only, and have nothing to do with the minister

rial office or government of the church? I answer, that this doctrine concerns you also, and that in a threefold respect, in relation to your judgment, to your affection, and to your practice.

And *1st*, it has a voice to your judgment, in order to rectify a vulgar mistake, that many are possessed of, *viz.* That it is the easiest thing in the world to be a minister. Many men think no work hard but manual service and operations. They look upon those to have a severe and difficult task, who are drudges all the day at hard labour. And so I grant they have; but let me tell you, that mental work is no less hard and difficult. For while the hard work of a labouring man keeps his body healthful and vigorous, it is commonly quite otherwise with hard students. For scholars spend the finest and best of their spirits, which, together with a sedentary life, doth sooner exhaust their strength and vigour, than the greatest bodily labour can do. For while the spirits are constantly drawn up into the brain by incessant and close thinking, after the manner of a perpetual limbec, the rest of the body must proportionably be exhausted, and prove languid and weak. Whence it comes to pass, that while they tug and sweat at the pump of study and meditation, they have oft but few spirits left duly to perform the inferior animal offices of digestion and chilification, and so stand in need of more and finer supplies to recruit or recover nature. Solomon, who was certainly the most competent judge of things of this kind in the world, gives us this determination of the matter; that as, upon the one hand, the sleep of a labouring man is sweet, and consequently his labour healthful and strengthening unto him: So upon the other hand, much study is a weariness of the flesh, as tending exceedingly to exhaust nature. And surely our own, and the experience of all men, doth sufficiently confirm what Solomon says in

both these respects: For it is a very rare thing to see one that has been a hard student all his days, to continue vigorous and healthful so long as other men. And, therefore, the apostle had good reason to advise Timothy to use a little wine, and such like refreshing things, for his stomach's sake, and his frequent infirmities of body; that in proportion to the consumption of spirits by study, preaching, and other labours, there might be a care to recruit and supply nature, which could not subsist long without this prudential concern, for his being kept in a capacity to continue his usefulness and serviceableness to the church of Christ. But I suppose I have said enough in the preceding part of this discourse, to convince you and all men, that the work of a minister is no play or pastime, but a great, weighty, serious, and laborious task, seeing as the spider doth proportionably diminish its body, as it increaseth its web; so also doth a hard student in this case; the consideration of which will therefore oblige every one of us to cry out with the apostle, who is sufficient for this? and make us conclude with him also, that no man is sufficient for it, without the special presence, assistance, and conduct of God.

2dly, The doctrine I have been upon, has a voice to your affection also: That seeing the ministerial work is so great and difficult, ye would pity us, sympathize with us, and put a favourable construction on our weaknesses and imperfections. Alas, my friends, if this great apostle was not sufficient for these things; who of us can or dare say, we are? Whenever therefore ye see a minister proud, conceited of his performances, and full of himself, disdainful and contemning others, and magnifying his own parts, as looking upon his work to be the easiest thing in the world, ye may certainly conclude, that he is either an empty and weak man, who has no sense of his work, or a wicked and

godless

godless person, who minds it not otherwise than as a trade. As for my own part, I have been apt to run to a contrary extreme, in sinking frequently into a despondency this way ; which yet I am far from approving myself, in seeing I hope I may venture to say, that it was by a very peculiar and special call and concurrence of divine providence, that I entered into the ministry at first, and have since that time served God in the gospel of his son, with sincerity though great weakness, in several places of his vineyard. And though I am bold to appeal to the most high, that I have never changed my station or place of residence, but upon the concurrence of such circumstances, as appeared plainly to contain a new call of providence, and were as the removing of the pillar of cloud and of fire, which I was obliged to follow ; yet I must confess, that it has ever been with fear and concern, that I have obtained of myself the liberty to obey, in such changes of my life. And now that your kindness, rather than your judgment, has called me to the work of the ministry among you, in this great city, where there are so many valuable persons that labour in the word and doctrine ; I must tell you, that it has not been easy with me, upon that and many other accounts, to comply with your call and invitation, even though so unanimous, as to have no dissenting vote. But now that my way has been made plain to me, and that I have yielded to your desire, to serve God among you (as long as he sees fit to continue me with you) as your minister and pastor, I must earnestly beg that your sympathy may be with me, and your charity for me, as considering the greatness of my work, and my insufficiency for it : from a conscientious apprehension of which my shyness in accepting your call for some time past has entirely proceeded. And now as I undertake this work with fear and dread ; so when ye observe my failings and weaknesses in
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the discharge of it (as no doubt ye frequently will) then pray call to your remembrance, that ye see nothing but what I did plainly and publickly forewarn you of in this my entry-sermon, as well as more privately before.

Pity us therefore, my friends, under our frailties, for we are not angels, but poor weak creatures, subject to like passions with other men, and perhaps liable to more infirmities than most of yourselves. Be fuller therefore of charity than censure, of compassion than prejudice. For I beseech you to consider this one thing, whenever ye find yourselves inclined to judge hardly or reflect severely upon us, *viz.* That we have all your work, and a great deal more besides. We have souls to save, prejudices to overcome, lusts to conquer, as well as you. But we have much to do with respect to your salvation, as well as our own. We have all your difficulties to overcome, all your temptations to resist, and all your duties to do, in as far as these are common to christians. But besides all these, we have peculiar trials and a special service, as we are ministers, which ye are not called to nor acquainted with. But to leave this.

3/y. The doctrine I have been upon has a voice also to you, as to your practice, as well as ours. This may appear strange to some, at first view : but upon a nearer approach ye will find that it concerns you more than perhaps you are aware of. If ye ask, how can this be ? I tell you that even ye are obliged to be assisting to us in our work, that we may be enabled and encouraged to the right performance of it.

I am not upon any thing here, that has the least relation to our temporal interest. For tho' it be your duty to assist us even this way, as ye are able ; yet I would have you know, that I seek not yours, but you. God himself, and all men that have hitherto known me, bear me witness,

that

that I never coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel; and ye shall know it, if ye do not already. God knows that I love not this world in this sense. And if there be any who prostitute the ministry for such fordid ends, I am bold to say of them, as I am a minister of Jesus Christ, that their money shall perish with them. But to return; I say, ye may help us in our work, and that in three respects.

1. By your using freedom with us, as to the state of your own souls. For, tho' I know no other foundation for Popish auricular confession than wordly policy, yet you will find it not a little advantageous to your souls, to consult faithful ministers in dark or dubious cases, that ye may be perhaps sometimes exceedingly perplexed with. And to consult with us, upon such occasions, will be also very useful to us in directing us in our discourses, so as to preach home to your understandings and consciences, for your good. For the people are in some sense the minister's library, which direct him in the choice of his texts, subjects amplifications, and applications or uses. And seeing the work of a minister in his studies and meditations and in his publick performances, is enough, were there no more, to take him entirely up, ye ought to go to him or send for him, when the case is urgent and requires it, who cannot otherwise know all your circumstances. And one thing further I cannot but mind you of; that, when any of you or your friends are sick, ye send for the elder to direct and comfort you then, and to pray for you, while ye or they are in case to join with him in prayer. For I have observed some to neglect this, till their dying friends be brought so low, that they are incapable of understanding what is said to them, and consequently unable to join in those petitions that are put up for them. Let me therefore tell you, that ye must not look upon prayer as a charm, in that hour, that can give a passport to heaven, to those souls that are altogether unmeet

meet for that state. And therefore if ye can make not the prayers of others your own, by a hearty concurrence with the petitions offered up for you, ye can expect no benefit by them. In such a case the pious and devout supplications of ministers or others, will return into their own bosoms, fraught with blessings; while the impenitent and unbelieving sinner, who flees not to God in Christ for mercy, shall receive no good by all these.

2. Ye may help us, by your prayers to God for us, and the success of our studies and labours. This great apostle of the gentiles had such a sense of his weakness and insufficiency for this great work, that he did not reckon himself to be above the prayers of the meanest serious christians. Nay he earnestly begs this from the Thessalonian christians, as a favour and kindness that he did exceedingly want; "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from absurd and wicked men, for all men have not faith;" 2 Thess.

1. 2. And how earnestly and pathetically does he beg this favour from the believing Romans also "Now beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea and that the service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the Saints: That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." And surely the apostle found, that he stood in need of the fervent and constant prayers of churches and particular christians, but much more do such poor creatures as we are need the supplications of all good christians? therefore let me beseech you my dear friends, to pray for us, for a blessing upon our studies and labours among you, and for assistance and success

All our work ; that we may be enabled so to behave ourselves, and to have God so present with us, that we may not be left to bare external ordinances; or made to suck at empty breasts ; but that the spiritual glory of God may fill our assemblies, and be with us also apart in our closets and open conversation ? so that we may both save our own souls, and the souls of them that hear us ; and may rejoice together in the day of judgment, and for eternity.

3. Help us in this one thing further, and we shall desire no more of you, nay we shall reckon our work as easy as ye yourselves can possibly think it is : and yet the thing we desire concerns you more than us, and is no way unreasonable or disadvantageous, as ye yourselves cannot but acknowledge. For it is only this, that ye would believe and obey the message we bring from God to you. O ! be not won over to Christ, and to his laws and institutions, and we shall reckon our work not only easy and light, but the most delightful thing in the world. The obstinacy, unbelief, impenitency, and disobedience of many, yea most, that hear the gospel, is a load above all the other burdens of a poor minister of Christ. Yield yourselves therefore to the Lord, and be ye reconciled to all his precepts, laws and dispensations ; and let it be your great business to make your calling and election sure, by working out your salvation with fear and trembling ; and then set yourselves to walk closely and humbly with your God, as the children of light and of the day. And if ye do this, we will complain no more, nay we shall rejoice in the hardest task we may be put to, and the severest sufferings we may meet with, in doing our duty, and assisting you in yours. O ! therefore make haste to heaven, and walk in the way that leads thither ; watching carefully over ourselves, considering what enemies, both within you and about you, ye have to wrestle with and overcome. Let this

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A Discourse concerning

this then be our work and employment continually, my friends, that so when all our sorrows and labours are over, and when our souls take wing from these bodies into the unseen regions; both you and I may happily and joyfully meet together, before the throne of God and of the lamb, to join in our songs of praise with the general assembly of glorious angels and saints, in our Father's house above.

In order to this, may the Lord assist us all, so to run our race that we may thus finish our course with joy: that that we may hear our master call us to himself, saying; "come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Come ye good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord. Ye shall now rest for ever from your labours, and your works shall follow you in their happy effects, and as ye have been faithful over a few things, lo! I make you rulers over many things. Amen.

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A
BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF
RELIGION.

AS IT CENTERS IN

CHRIST.

Sect. 1. The introduction.—**S**UCH is the mystery of Godliness, and such is the inscrutable wisdom of the author and institutor of our holy religion, in the harmonious concatenation of all the necessary and essential parts of it ; that he who believeth one fundamental article thereof aright believeth all, and he who disbelieveth one, hath no true faith of any : All
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the articles of our religion being as so many links of a chain, inseparably and indissolubly joined together ^b. But yet among all the articles of our faith, there is one, which by the appointment of God, is to us the foundation of all others, and the ground-work upon which all are placed. And this is that blessed article of the redeemer and Saviour of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ ^c: who is the alone center, wherein all the lines of divine truth do meet, from the outmost circumference of revelation; and is therefore the sum and substance both of the scripture itself, and of our religion contained therein ^d.

^a Joh. 14. 1. & 17. 3. Mat. 28. 19. ^b Rom. 8. 19, 20. Eph. 1. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, &c. 1 Pet. 1. 2. 2 Thess. 13, 14. ^c 1 Cor. 3. 11. 1 John 5. 1, 12. ^d Col. 1. 26, 27.

II. The whole scripture centers in Christ.—If therefore, we consider the holy scripture, we shall find that Christ Jesus is the sum and scope of this divine book, from the beginning to the end ^a. For it was he whom God promised immediately after the fall, as a seed to repair lost mankind, and to make up that dreadful breach which sin had made between God and us ^b. He it was, whose promised coming was the expectation of the saints in all preceding ages of the church; on which their faith depended, and their hope did hang, and whereon their salvation was founded ^c. It was he, who was the substance of the old testament dispensation: who was pointed at in their types, shadowed forth by their ceremonies and rites, and designed in all their sacrifices and oblations ^d. It is he, who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending of all things ^e. In him are all the antient prophecies fulfilled ^f; and by him the law of God was perfectly kept and observed ^g, and the curse thereof obliterated and removed.

moved ^h. So that in him all the promises of God are yea and amen ⁱ. By all which it is plain, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the scope and sum of the oracles of God, both of the old and the new testament; though he was veiled under the antient dispensation, whereas he is unveiled now to us,

^a 1 John 5. 39. Luke 24. 27. ^b Gen 3. 15. Gal. 3. 16. ^c Acts 10. 43. John 8. 58. ^d 1 Cor. 10. 1—6. Gal. 3. 24. Heb. 7. 17. & 8. 5. & 9. 1, &c. & 10. 1. ^e Rev. 1. 11. ^f Heb. 1. 1, 2. ^g Mat. 5. 17. ^h Gal. 3. 10, 13. James 2. 10. ⁱ 2 Cor. 1. 20.

III. The scriptural religion centers also wholly in Christ; particularly the knowledge of God absolutely considered.—And as Christ is the sum of the bible, so likewise of our religion revealed therein ^a. For he is the scope of all ^b; and both the author and finisher of our faith ^c. All that knowledge of God, which is proposed to us in the sacred records, is in and by Christ ^d; whether we consider God absolutely in himself, or relatively with respect to his creatures. If absolutely, God out of Christ is not to be known: for so considered, he is inscrutable, unsearchable, and past finding out ^e. The knowledge therefore of God, which men attain to by natural light only and the assistance of ratiocination, scarce deserves the name of knowledge, seeing all true knowledge tends to the bettering of him that hath it; which this seldom if ever doth ^f. For God out of Christ, is a consuming fire to sinners ^g; and dwells in light inaccessible, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see ^h. So that if we would have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, we must have it in the face of Jesus Christ ⁱ: He being the only glass wherein we can truly see God. For in him only it is, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily ^k: And it is only by him that we

have free access to God, whereby we may enter with boldness into the holiest place, by that new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil of his flesh ¹. For he only is the way, the truth, and the life ^m. So that without Christ, a man's knowledge and faith is but error and presumption, his way but straying, and his life but dying.

^a Col. 1. 19. John 17. 3. ¹ Cor. 2. 2. Phil. 4. 23. ^b Rom. 11. 36. ^c Heb. 12. 2. ^d John 14. 9. ^e Job 11. 7, 8. & 37. 23. ^f Rom. 1. 20, 21, &c. ^g Deut. 4. 24. ^h 1 Tim. 6. 16. ⁱ 2 Cor. 4. 6. ^k Col. 2. 9. ^l Heb. 10. 19, 20. ^m John 14. 6.

IV. The knowledge of God relatively considered centers in Christ also, particularly his decrees.—If again we consider God relatively, with respect to creatures; we shall find, that all that knowledge of God so considered is in Christ also, whether we consider God in his decrees, or in the execution of them. If the decrees of God come under consideration, though we know very little of them, seeing they are that which is called God's secret will, which belongs not properly to us ^a: Yet so much we know, that it is only in and through Christ that men are predestinated to life, in order to be conformed to his glorious image ^b, according to that eternal compact and agreement that pass between the father and the son ^c. Upon which account he is said to have had his delights with the sons of men, before the world was made ^d. And therefore he is brought in saying, behold, I come, as in the Volume of thy book it is written of me, for I delight to do thy will, O my God ^e.

^a Deut. 29. 29. ^b Rom. 8. 29. Eph. 1. 4, 5, 6. 1 Tim. 1. 9. ^c John 6. 38, 39, 40. and Ch. 10. 17, 18. Tit. 2. 14. ^d Prov. 8. 31. ^e Psal. 40. 7. Heb. 10. 7.

V. And so does the execution of them, first as to Creation.—Or if the execution of the degrees of God be considered by us; we shall find, that all this is in Christ also, both with respect to God's works of creation and providence. For if we consider creation; it is Christ, who was the Logos or essential word of God, by which he produced all things. For as he was in the beginning with God, and was himself God: So it was by him that all things were made, nothing being made without him^a. All created things therefore, that are either in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or principalities, or powers, or any thing else, were all made by him and for him^b. For as he is the image of the invisible God, so he is also the first producer of every creature^c.

^a John 1. 1, 2, 3. Eph. 3. 9. ^b Col. 1. 16. ^c Col. 1. 15.

VI. And next as to providence.—Or if we consider the providence of God, this is in and through Christ also: for as he made all things, and is before all things; so by him also do all things consist^a. He is the great and sole dispenser of providence, and governour of the world. For the father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the son; that all men may honour the son even as they honour the father^b. It is he then, who is both the king of nations, in a general sense^c; and the king of saints, and of the church, in a more special relation^d: of whose kingdom, power and dominion, there will be no end^e; for he must reign, until he has put all his enemies under his feet^f, and until the mystery of God within time be finished^g. For then, and not till then, will he deliver up his media-

torial kingdom on earth to his father, that God may be all in all. ^h.

^a Col. 1. 17. ^b John 5. 22, 23, 27. ^c Jer. 10. 7. ^d Rev. 15. 3. ^e Isa. 9. 7. Luke 1. 32, 33. ^f 1 Cor. 15. 25. ^g Rev. 10. 7. ^h 1 Cor. 15. 24, 27.

VII. Christ more immediately considered : first as to his person.—But that we may see more fully and clearly, that all our religion centers in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, with respect to us; let us consider himself more immediately, in his person, office and benefits. If in his person; he is the eternal son of God ^a, and equal with his father ^b. He is the almighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace ^c: who being the second person of the blessed Trinity ^d, came in the fulness of time, and became flesh, taking upon him the human nature ^e, from the great love he bare to us ^f; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil ^g; and thus being made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful, faithful, and every way fitly qualified mediator for us ^h.

^a 1 John 4. 14. ^b John 5. 17, 18. ^c Isa. 8. 6. ^d Mat. 28. 19. 1 John 5. 7. ^e Gal. 4. 4. John 1. 14. ^f Rom. 5. 8. ^g Heb. 2. 14. ^h Heb. 2. 17.

VIII. Secondly as to his office.—For all this did our kind and blessed master do and endure, that he might be every way fitted and qualified for discharging and performing that great office and trust, which the father had committed to him, and which for our benefit he had freely and cheerfully undertaken ^a. And thus he is our Saviour and Mediator, faithfully acting as prophet, priest and king to his people ^b. He acts as a prophet, in illuminating our darkened minds with the saving knowledge of himself, and revealing

vealing unto us the perfect and holy will of God ^c. As a priest, in satisfying divine justice for us, in expiating our sins, in conciliating to us the divine favour, and in making intercession for us ^d. And as a king, in governing his people, subduing their iniquities, preserving them from dangers and the power of their enemies, and in ordering all things for their profit and advantage ^e.

^a John 10. 17, 18. ^b Acts 2. 10. ^c Acts 3. 22. John 1. 18. 1 Cor. 1. 30. ^d Heb. 4. 14. and 7. 25, 27. and 10. 12. Psalm 110. 1, 2, 3, &c. Mat. 22. 42, &c. ^e Psalm 2. 6. Isa. 33. 22. and 43. 2, 3. Acts 17. 31. Rom. 8. 28. 1 Cor. 3. 22.

IX. And thirdly as to his benefits.—And from hence it is, that all the benefits of Christ do result ^a: Christ being thus the foundation of all our mercies and blessings; and both the procurer and dispenser of them to his people ^b. For it is hence, that we come to be renewed after the image of God ^c; that we are regenerated and born again ^d; that our sins are pardoned and done away ^e; that we are justified ^f, reconciled ^g, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God ^h; and that we receive the adoption of sons ⁱ, and the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, father ^k, being made heirs and joint-heirs with Christ ^l; and that we are also sanctified and made holy by the blood of sprinkling ^m, being thereby cleansed and purified from the blot and stain of sin ⁿ, and delivered from the power and prevalency of it ^o.

^a Rom. 8. 32. ^b Eph. 4. 8. ^c Eph. 4. 23, 24. ^d John 1. 13. and 3. 7. ^e Eph. 1. 7. ^f 1 Cor. 1. 30. ^g Rom. 5. 10. ^h Heb. 10. 14. ⁱ John 1. 12. ^k Rom. 8. 15. ^l Rom. 8. 17. ^m Heb. 12. 24. 1 Pet. 1. 2. ⁿ Titus 2. 14. ^o 1 John 3. 6. and 5. 18.

X.

X. Particularly the gift of the holy spirit.—And it is from hence, that the holy spirit is sent as Christ's vicegerent to his church: being given to us, to be our comforter^a, our advocate^b, and our instructor and persuader^c, by whom we are directed and led into all truth^d, guided and assisted in all our ways^e, and particularly in our prayers^f. And hence it is therefore, that the fruits of the spirit do all result and proceed^g; such as peace of conscience^h, joy in believingⁱ, increase of grace^k, true Christian liberty^l, and final perseverance^m.

^a 2 Cor. 13. 14. John 16. 7. ^b 1 John 2. 1, 20. John 16. 8. and Ch. 15. 25, 26, 27. ^c John 14. 26. ^d Rom. 8. 14. Gal. 5. 25. ^e Rom. 8. 26, 27. ^f Gal. 5. 22, 23, 24. ^g John 14. 27. ^h 1 Pet. 1. 8. Rom. 15. 13. ⁱ Col. 2. 19. ^j Gal. 5. 1, 23. 2 Cor. 3. 17. ^k Rom. 11. 29. 2 Tim. 2. 19. Heb. 13. 25. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

XI. The knowledge the scripture gives us of the church centers in Christ.—Thus Christ is all in all to his people^a. He is the captain of their salvation^b, and the saviour of his body the church^c: for he is the head of this society^d, and the chief corner stone of this building^e; seeing of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named^f. It is by him, that the veil of servile ceremonies was rent^g, and that handwriting of ordinances that was against us was cancelled, nulled and vacated^h: so that the wall of partition being broken downⁱ, we have now an access into the holy of holies^k. For he hath ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and given gifts for men, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith,

faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ¹. For which ends he qualifies some to dispense his word and ordinances, and makes them able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter but of the spirit ^m. And it is he likewise, who hath left his word, and the dispensation thereof in his church, until he come again, with a promise of his presence with us, even unto the end of the world ⁿ: bequeathing therewith the two sacraments of the new testament, baptism ^o, and the Lords supper ^p, as the seals of the new covenant, and as pledges of his love to his people ^q.

^a Col. 3. 11. ^b Heb. 2. 10. ^c Eph. 5. 23. ^e Col. 1. 18. and 2. 19. ^e Eph. 2. 20. ^f Eph. 3. 15. ^g Heb. 8. 7, 8. ^h Col. 2. 14. ⁱ Eph. 2. 14. ^k Heb. 10. 19. 20. ^l Eph. 4. 8, 12, 13. ^m 2 Cor. 3. 6. ⁿ Matt. 28. 19, 20. ^o Rom. 6. 4. Col. 2. 12. ^p 1 Cor. 11. 24, 25, 26. ^q Gen. 17. 10. Rom. 4. 11, 23.

XII. And so doth the knowledge the scripture gives us of the last things.—And lastly, it is Christ, through whom we have the hopes of eternal life ^a. It is he, who is our forerunner who is gone before to prepare a place for us, that where he is we may be also ^c. For he is to come again to judge the world in righteousness ^d, and to give unto every man according to his works ^e to punish wicked men, and to render recompense to his enemies ^f; and to reward his friends and followers ^g, in honouring them as if they were joint assessors with him, by setting them at his right hand, when he sits on the throne of judgment, to pass sentence upon apostate angels and wicked men ^h; and by introducing them, when the judgement is over, into the kingdom of their father prepared for them from the beginning

beginningⁱ where they shall see the face of God;^b and being seated in the blessed mansions above^l, shall there enjoy and satiate themselves with the full fruition of the love of God their father, with the constant participation of the grace of the son their redeemer, and with uninterrupted communion and peace of the holy spirit their paraclet^m. And so they shall become equal with the angelsⁿ, and be ever with the Lord^o.

^a Rom. 6. 23. ^b Heb. 6. 20. ^c John 14. 2, 3. ^d Acts 17. 31. ^e Rom. 2. 6. ^f Isa. 66. 6. ^g Heb. 11. 26. ^h 1 Cor. 6. 2, 8. ⁱ Mat. 25. 34. ^k 1 Cor. 13. 12. ^l John 14. 2. ^m 2 Cor. 13. 14. ⁿ Luke 20. 36. ^o 1 Thess. 4. 17.

XIII. Christian duties and practice center in Christ, as well as the truths and principles of religion.—Now I hope I have made good what I undertook to demonstrate, that all the great truths of our religion do terminate in Christ. and perhaps ye may expect further, that I should insist as long upon the duties of christianity, as centering in him also. But when you allow yourselves to think, that Christian practice flows from the right knowledge and true belief of the principles I have been considering, by a natural and necessary consequence, whence our Lord assures us, that it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent^a: I say, when ye consider this, ye will find that godliness being the conclusion that follows the foregoing premises; there is no need to insist upon this, after what I have said to demonstrate these. And as the apostle says, Christ is the head of all true Christians, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of the measure of every part, maketh in

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crease of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love ^b. Therefore we must conclude with the same inspired writer, that Christians being said to live is an expression synonymous to that other (as the more proper and emphatical of the two) that Christ lives in us: seeing the life we live now in the flesh is a life of faith in the son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us ^c. For, for us to live in Christ, and to die is gain ^d. So that the whole of practical religion as well as theoretical, doth plainly appear to center in Christ. For as the apostle excellently argues; If we are risen with Christ, we ought to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and set our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth: for, if we are true Christians, we are dead to sin, and only alive to God, our life being hid with Christ in God; and therefore seeing Christ is indeed our life and shall appear again, we are certain that we also shall appear with him in glory ^e. Whatever therefore we do, in word or deed, we are to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the father by him ^f. For there is a close and indissoluble union between Christ and his people, by which they are so united to him, as to become as it were one spirit with him ^g. Whence it comes to pass that we are said to be members of his body, of his flesh and of his bone ^h: being secured thus as to life; for because he lives, we shall live also ⁱ. For all is ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's ^k. This lays us under strong obligations to duty and holiness; seeing we are married to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God ^l. And adherence to and dependence upon Christ, is the only way to become fruitful: for as the branch cannot bring forth fruit, unless it abide in the vine, no more can we except we abide in him ^m. It

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is from hence that they, that persecute the true servants of Christ, are looked upon as if they had persecuted himself^a; and that neglect of duty to poor saints is punished as a neglect of service to Christ^o and that upon the other hand, serviceableness to them is rewarded, as if it had been done to him immediately^p. And from hence also it is, that we are led by the spirit of Christ, in all our ways^q; and that both the spirit and the bride join in one wish and desire, that Jesus Christ would hasten his coming again^r.

^a John 17. 3. ^b Eph. 4. 15, 16. ^c Gal. 2. 20. ^d Phil. 1. 21. ^e Col. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4. ^f Col. 3. 17. ^g 1 Cor. 6. 17. ^h Eph. 5. 30. ⁱ John 14. 19. ^k 1 Cor. 3. 22. ^l Rom. 7. 4. ^m John 15. 4. ⁿ Acts 9. 4, 5. ^o Mat. 25. 41, &c. ^p Mat. 25. 34. ^q Rom. 8. 14. Gal. 5. 18. ^r Rev. 22. 17, 20.

XIV. The improvement.—And thus I have given you a brief account of my creed, as I find it in scripture, and as it centers in Christ. By which it may easily appear how foolish and chimerical some men are, who confine the knowledge of Christ to his priestly office only, and to one branch of that, his satisfaction; yea to that only under one consideration of it, *viz.* as it relates to our justification, which they call imputed righteousness, in a sense that I am afraid many of themselves understand not. As for me, I am indeed resolved, with the apostle, to preach nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified^a. But then it must be in that latitude of expression, that I have insisted upon above. For he is neither a legal nor gospel-preacher who is not conscientiously careful so to behave himself, that he may be able to say, with the same apostle that he is pure from the blood of all men seeing he hath not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God^b. So that he that preacheth any truth that Christ has revealed, preacheth Christ,

as much as he that preacheth concerning his own person and office immediately.

^a 1 Cor. 2. 2. ^b Acts 20. 26, 27.

XV. The conclusion.—But I shall not trouble you with more relating to this subject now. Only one thing further I would say here, with respect to myself; that seeing I would begin my ministerial work, as I do design (thro the grace of God) to carry it on and end it, I must deal ingenuously with you and all men, in telling you; that though I pay all due deference to the confessions of faith, made by the reformed churches, and more particularly that excellent one composed by the assembly at Westminster: yet I cannot otherwise subscribe to any humane composition, as the foundation of my faith, but in as far as itself is founded on the holy word of God; which I must own to be my only creed, confession of faith and system of divinity, in the strictest and most proper sense. For it is in obedience to Christ, that I find myself obliged, to call no man father of my religion but God, nor any man, the infallible Teacher of it but himself ^c. And seeing the apostle commands all Christians to examine the truths that even he and other inspired men delivered, saying, try all things, and then hold fast that which ye find to be good ^b; (for which practice the Bereans are so much commended by Luke ^c); I therefore think that a minister, on a double account, ought to take this liberty, and be continually taken up in meditating upon the great things of divine revelation, for the right handling of which he is particularly to be responsible to God ^d. But this I readily confess, that we ought to study and preach and live the truth so in love ^e, to them that differ from us, as not needlessly to disturb the peace of the church of God; seeing the true safety of it ought to be dearer

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as it centers in Christ.

dearer to ministers than any thing in this world. I have therefore laid this down as the great maxim of my future service in the church, that *salus Ecclesiæ suprema ejus lex est*. According to which rule, and in the way I have just now mentioned, I design, through the divine assistance, to read, meditate, speak and act; which may God in mercy grant, for the sake of his dear son and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Mat. 23. 9, 10. b 1 Thess. 5. 21. c Acts 17. 11. d
1 Tim. 4. 13, 14, 15, 16. e Eph. 4. 15.



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